The Limits of Control

Transnational Migration Trajectories of Clandestine Tunisian Migrants and Assisted Return Between Governed Voluntariness and Repression

Inauguraldissertation

an der Philosophisch-historischen Fakultät der Universität Bern

zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde

vorgelegt von

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Promotionsdatum 14. Oktober 2016

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Abstract

The Limits of Control takes Switzerland's programme for assisted voluntary return migration (AVR) as an example to study the emerging contradictions of the sovereign liberal nation state in the governance of transnational mobility. The aim to remove the "undesirable alien" from the commonwealth governed by the state bureaucracy produces a fundamental problem for the liberal nation state as it questions the bureaucracy's universal promise of equality and fairness.

The ethnographic case study focuses on Switzerland's AVR programme for Tunisian asylum seekers after the 2011 uprising against the Ben Ali regime and shows how the migration bureaucracy produces, shapes, and governs migrants' "voluntariness." It is based on ethnographic fieldwork among return migrants and return migration bureaucrats in Tunisia and Switzerland in 2013 and 2014. The paradoxical notion of *governed voluntariness* serves as the analytical lens to explore the efforts of the migration bureaucracy to reconcile the attempts to

anticipate and enforce negative asylum decisions with the bureaucratic self-understanding of a governance by mutual consent. Therefore, *The Limits of Control* tells the story of the failing attempt to uphold the illusion of governing transnational migration by mutual consent creating a so-called win-win-win situation for the country of origin, the country of destination, and the migrant as well.

Adopting the thesis of the autonomy of migration AoM as an analytical proposition, the ethnography confronts the experiences and expectations of mobility and return of six Tunisian migrants of different age and origin with the attempts of Switzerland's migration bureaucracy to regulate migrants' mobility through AVR programs. Therefore, this study exemplarily shows how these contested controls at the margins of the state (of undocumented migration) contradict the modern liberal nation state's self-understanding of a governance by mutual consent.

Keywords: Autonomy of Migration, Return Migration, Governance, Bureaucracy, Switzerland, Tunisia,

Preface

Many persons accompanied me during this dissertation project. I am very grateful for their support. As any PhD student knows, when you decide to embark on the adventure of a dissertation, it takes you to many different places. You experience the excitement of discovering something unexpected. But you also make numerous detours and reach dead ends. During this adventure, you rely on the help and support of companions, who share a part of your journey. As supervisors, accomplices, informants, friends, or interlocutors, they contribute in a way or another to make a dissertation happen.

First, I would like to thank for the intellectual support. Prof. Dr. Julia Eckert from the Institute of Social Anthropology at the University of Bern accompanied this dissertation with helpful comments and critical remarks. She encouraged me to trust my ideas and arguments when I was in doubt. Simultaneously, she was a critical reader and commenter, and pointed out the flaws in my argumentation

time and again. The intellectual freedom she gave me in pursuing my ideas is remarkable. The intellectual support includes also the precious discussions during the dissertation colloquiums. In particular Laura Affolter, Simon Affolter, Simone Marti, Johanna Muggler, Raphaël Rey, Anna-Lena Wolf, and further occasional guests helped to sharpen my arguments and discussed parts of the text. With his books and articles on undocumented migration and border regimes, my second supervisor Dr. Nicholas de Genova from King's College London was a very inspiring source. As one of the leading scholars in critical migration studies, I am grateful that he accepted my request to have him as my second supervisor.

With respect to fieldwork, I would like to thank all those who have spent their time with me sharing their stories, information, and parts of their respective lives. Some of you were not only informants but shared your knowledge and your biographies with me. This allowed me to gain an intimate insight into the world of Tunisian *harragas*. These companions include Hassan, Khairi, Fathi, Yassine, Kaïs, Amine, Foued, Aziz, Mohammed, Sofyann, Mahmoud, Selim, Hajri, and so many others who I do not mention because they want to stay in anonymity. I am also grateful to the many officials, who opened the doors to their offices and gave me insight into their day-to-day work.

I have received great support from my parents throughout all the years. Especially during the last couples of months of this PhD, together with my

parents-in-law they helped me and my partner a lot looking after our two daughters so that I was able to focus entirely on finishing my dissertation.

I conclude with a particular thanks to my partner and our two wonderful daughters. Our first daughter was born when I started this dissertation. The second, when I was writing up the text. Juggling between academia on the one hand and care work at home on the other hand, I am fully aware that I sometimes failed to take my fair share in care work; in particular during the last months of this dissertation project. I would like to thank you all three for your patience and love.

Bern, July 2016

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I. Introduction

Expectations of Mobility and Experiences of Immobility in Jebel Jelloud

A dusty main road dissects the neighbourhood. Two-story buildings line the street; some made of brick, some built in concrete. Hardly any building is finished; here a staircase that ends in the air, there some reinforcing irons that give a hint to a projected upper floor yet to be realised. The road is full of potholes, the sidewalk mostly missing or occupied by shops that sell their goods in the street.

Jebel Jelloud is a typical *quartier populaire* in the South-Western suburbs of Tunis. It is not at all a slum, although you can spot a lot of informal settlements. But it lacks any sign of modest wealth you can find in the middle-class neighbourhoods. In former times, Jebel Jelloud was the neighbourhood of the tanners, hence the name. As a less honourable profession, the tanners were

banned from settling within the *medina* or in its immediate proximity. It was a dirty job with little prestige. Today, apart from its name nothing reminds of the former inhabitants' profession. The workshops closed long time ago. Yet, what remains is the attitude of Tunis's middle-class towards Jebel Jelloud's populations. In their imagination, it has remained a dirty neighbourhood somewhere in the outskirts of the town. This is also linked to the later history of this neighbourhood. During the French protectorate, the colonial administration settled the heavy industry in Jebel Jelloud. The phosphate and cement industries built big processing facilities. This brought new jobs to the neighbourhood. Newcomers from the internal, rural parts of Tunisia found work as well and settled in the proximity of the factories where prices for land and houses were affordable. Some of the factories survived after independence in 1956. However, Jebel Jelloud has remained a dirty corner of the town.

The residential areas are scattered between big factory sites. Some of them are the result of an uncontrolled urbanisation due to the rural-urban migration and the need for additional housing facilities.

Abdellah was sitting with me at a shaky plastic table of a small café on the sidewalk of one of the main roads that dissects the neighbourhood.[1] On the table

[1] I anonymised my informants throughout the whole dissertation in order to protect their privacy. This includes changing their names, but also some further details that would allow to identify them. Although some of my informants would have preferred to appear with their real names in the text and tell 'the real story to the world', as someone once formulated in a conversation, I decided to apply the same anonymisation rules for everyone.

two glasses of strong, bitter coffee, as usually served with the two sugar cubes the waiter clamped between the edges of the tulip-shaped glass building a kind of a sweet bridge over the black liquid. It was late in April but the sun was already burning without mercy. From time to time, a lorry passed by, trailing a white cloud of dust. Each time, its roaring engine noise interrupted our conversation. Children in school uniforms were passing by in small groups, chatting and laughing. Abdellah drew on his cigarette and continued with sonorous voice: "No, no… it was so easy. Imagine, at that time, you just took the next ferry from La Goulette—and off you go![2] No paperwork, no visa. And once in France, it was almost certain that you will find some work." He quit Jebel Jelloud when he was 21 and followed his brother who was already living in Lyon. Thanks to him, it was "really easy to find work." And when he was fed up with one job, he simply changed the construction site and started to work for a different employer. In total, Abdellah spent nearly 20 years of his life in France. "I never had any visa, and most of the time not even a *carte de séjour. Al-ḥamdu lil-lāh!*"

Abdellah ordered the next coffee and took me on his journey as a migrant worker; from Marseille to Lyon and the suburbs of Paris, back to Marseille, the harbour town where he debarked and embarked so many times over the years. It was complicated to keep track with his migration biography. Each time we sat together and tried to reconstruct his trajectory, we ended up with a slightly

[2] La Goulette is the port city of Tunis.

different version. Sometimes, even he confused some dates and the order of events. It is a life that leaves almost no traces but in your memory, some furrows on the forehead, and scarred hands. Not to forget the few faded photographs he once brought to one of our meetings.

Originally, I intended to meet Abdellah as an intermediary, who would bring me in touch with a group of *harragas* who came back from Europe only recently.[3] He knows everybody, and everybody knows him, I was told. Therefore, Abdellah was a precious gatekeeper for me who helped me to make the neighbourhood legible. But as our conversation about his own migration trajectory between Tunisia and Europe unfolded on this sunny day in April 2014, I began to realise how his own biography is intertwined with the other migration biographies of the young *harragas* I collected during my fieldwork. Add to this picture my very own presence in the field and how it is conditioned by the European migration regime (indeed, in a very favourable and different way), and you end up with a pattern of differentiated mobility that structures the transnational space between Tunisia and Europe.

"Let's go. I take you to the guys," he said, stubbed out his cigarette, slipped into his jacket and pointed to the left with the tip of the next cigarette he was already

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[3] Harraga is a widely used term in Tunisia and the other North African countries. It has several meanings. The term derives from the Arabic root حرق, which has the meaning of 'to burn'. It refers to the practice of clandestine, almost exclusively male, migration across the Mediterranean, typically in small fishing boats that are no longer in use. Simultaneously, harraga designates the person who performs this type of clandestine border crossing. In everyday language, the French equivalents 'brûler la frontière' (for border-crossing) and 'brûleur' (a person who 'burns' the border) are also used quite widely.

holding between thumb and index finger. I followed him to his car; a dented black Peugeot 205 Abdellah had parked in the shadow of an acacia tree. A few turns later – I already lost my orientation – we were bumping over an unpaved dead-end road full of potholes towards and abandoned garage, enclosed by a three-meter-tall courtyard wall made of a mixture between rugged concrete and brick stone. The rusty metal gate was half open.

When I had contacted him a few days ago, he told me that he would know some *harragas* who had come back recently and who had spent some time in Switzerland; exactly the type of informants I was desperately looking for. When I started fieldwork in Tunisia, I quickly began to realise that it was very difficult to find return migrants who firstly applied for asylum in Switzerland after 2011, and secondly decided to return back home neither with the programme of so-called assisted voluntary return AVR, nor forcibly deported. And in order to better understand the conflicting relationship between return migrants and the migration bureaucracy, I was especially interested in return migrants who abandoned the programme at a certain point or never joined it. A top-down approach through the organisation would not only have been a dead-end, but also questionable with regard to research ethics.

Abdellah pushed the gate open. The courtyard's soil was soaked with oil. Five young men were sitting around, sharing two cans of Celtia, the local brand of beer. Better to drink it here in this hidden place, I thought. Abdellah quickly introduced me to the group and explained them my concerns. The five men

pretended to ignore me. No one spoke a word. I felt uncomfortable, as an unwelcomed intruder. After an awkward moment of silence, one of the guys stood up and approached me. It later turned out that it was the one Abdellah had told me before that he had spent some time in Switzerland. Mohsen is a tall young man in his early twenty, with short black curly hair. In his left hand, he held a can of Celtia. With his distinct cheekbones he had a harsh appearance. This expression was emphasised by a distinct long scar on the left side of the neck. His jeans were worn-out and covered with splashes of concrete and paint; traces from yesterday's work I suspected. In a mix between Italian and French interspersed with a couple of expressions in Arabic, we exchanged some courtesies, and I explained my concerns. It took some time until we got into a proper conversation; not very surprising, given the way I entered the scene. In this first encounter, Mohsen remained rather scant with his remarks on his migration trajectory. For good reason, as I would learn only later. Interviewed so many times by migration officers in order to decide on his asylum application, he was just tired of repeating his story again and again. Even more, he had repeatedly made the experience that the narration of one's migration biography was a means of the state to control and govern his trajectory; an experience that contradicts what most of the textbooks on biographical interviews would tell you.

"Well, I spent the last three years in Italy," Mohsen told me. "When the borders were open in 2011, I quit this damned place with a couple of friends." During these weeks in the beginning of 2011, no one bothered who left the

neighbourhood. Security forces had other concerns than looking after a couple of young adult men eager for an adventure abroad and on the brink of escaping the country with its – at the same time exciting and threatening – presence full of uncertain promises and possibilities and an even more uncertain future. The parents were busy navigating through these times of uncertainty and unrest. Mohsen spent most of his time in Italy. "And to be honest, I did not work a lot." He had "a hard time" to find a job, most of the time anyway only as a day labourer. Yet his initial idea was to go to France, where a cousin of him was living near Marseille.[4]

Mohsen never made it to Marseille. He got stuck at the French-Italian border in Ventimiglia. It was the time when the French authorities closed the border due to the growing influx of especially Tunisian *harragas* in March and April 2011.[5] Therefore, he was forced to change his plans. Instead of Marseille, he went to Parma, where a cousin of him was living. He knew him from Jebel Jelloud. "He comes back visiting us regularly. At least twice a year: for the Aïd-el-Kebir and Ramadan. You have to know, he is rich, owns a house in our street and drives a

[4] In this and our subsequent conversation, we repeatedly came back to this cousin. Yet I was unable to clarify whether he refers to a cousin in the strict sense of (i.e. a son of a mother's or father's brother) or if he uses the term to identify a relative of the wider family in the same age as himself.

[5] Since then, the temporal closure of the border has become a usual measure of the French authorities. For example it was applied again in 2015 during the so-called European migration crisis.

big car. I'll show you his home next time." Mohsen called him and he gave him shelter for a couple of weeks.

But times have changed in Italy. Until 2008 when the financial crisis hit hard the country, it was comparatively easy to find work somewhere in Italy's informal labour market. Especially for Tunisian migrants: There was a well-established network of fellow nationals with a residence permit, and Italian migration and labour law allowed Tunisian migrants to enter the country and register themselves for a certain time as self-employed persons. After the expiration of this permit and as the renewal of it would have required to document a certain income from this self-employment, many of these Tunisians simply decided to refrain from filing an application and stayed as undocumented migrants in the country. This tactic was no longer possible after 2008 with the changing migration laws.

In contrast to his cousin, Mohsen struggled to find any employment, yet he stayed with his cousin for almost three years in Parma and tried to make a living as a day labourer for different small companies. At a certain point, he decided to search for alternatives. At that time in the middle 2013, rumours spread among the Tunisian community in Parma that it would be possible to apply for asylum in Switzerland. One of Mohsen's friend even got the information that you would receive money when you decide to return back to Tunisia; a change not to miss in his opinion. He was anyway fed up with his actual situation and did not see any real prospective in Italy.

In the meantime, Abdellah had left us. Mohsen sat down on a used tyre that was lying around. I followed his example and sat down as well. He offered me a sip of his beer, which I refused. I was not in the mood of drinking alcohol, especially not in the morning. Instead, he took a sip from his can and continued: "Don't ask me the details how I got to Switzerland. I can't remember… And I wouldn't tell you anyway…," he added with a smile. He just mentioned that it "took me a few days" to reach the Swiss border. After more than two weeks of immobility in Italy, the decision to move to Switzerland was taken quickly. He arrived in the reception centre in Chiasso and was subsequently transferred to the centre in Altstätten.[6] "Everything happened very fast. I spent only a couple of weeks in Altstätten and immediately asked for return assistance."

Our conversation continued and we were talking about his experience of Switzerland's asylum regime. He recalled the moment when he got an appointment at the reception centre for asylum seekers to apply for return assistance. Mohsen also explained how disappointed he was when he realised that the return assistance does not consist in just receiving money and an airplane ticket, as the rumour went in the community of Tunisian asylum seekers at that time. Instead, it would have implied submitting a project description, following a business training course, long periods of waiting, and the constant supervision

[6] Chiasso is a border town at the Swiss-Italian border and one of the main entrance points to Switzerland from Italy. Altstätten is a small town in the Eastern part of Switzerland and hosts one of the reception centers for asylum seekers.

by return migration officials. Mohsen explained: “But all I wanted was going home. And yeah… sure with some money in my pocket.” Therefore, he signed the return migration agreement. “But for me it was clear; I wouldn’t continue the programme once back home.” After the paperwork was settled, Mohsen received a ticket and flew back home to Enfidha-Hammamet, where he was received by an official. “He was Tunisian. Very arrogant… He gave me 50 Dinars for traveling home.” Mohsen told him that he would contact him again, but actually knew already that he wouldn’t get back in touch. “So that’s it. 50 Dinars. That’s all I ever received.”

All the sudden Mohsen interrupted his explanations. He fixed me with his eyes. A long moment of silence was following. Then he turned the table and began to interrogating me. Why am I spending time in Tunisia, hanging around with guys like him? Why is it interesting to collect stories of departure and return? Why am I nosing around here in this run-down neighbourhood instead of “having a nice time” in one of the tourist hotspots in Djerba or Hammamet? I sensed a sarcastic undertone in his questions but tried to overplay my insecurity. I replied that actually I have never been to Djerba or Hammamet. He laughed and said: “Nor have I… I don’t know these places neither. But you should. You are from Europe.” And as a tourist, I should go to visit these places, instead of hanging around in this “dull neighbourhood”, thus far his advice.

Our conversation moved back and forth between the possibilities and impossibilities of mobility, the differences between him and me, the dreams and

hopes of a better life, and the chances to realise one's dreams. Mohsen emptied the can of Celtia, crushed it and kicked it in the direction of his buddies who were still observing us in silence. Our chat faded out, and I tried to integrate his friends into the conversation. Apparently, they were not very interested, I deduced from their short one-word answers. At a certain point, I decided to leave and meet Mohsen again the other day. We exchanged numbers, and he accompanied me back to the main road, where we separated.

Regimes of Mobility

Back in my flat the same evening, I sat down at my desk to write up the summary of this day; just the usual ethnographer's habit. During the writing I realised that I did not understand what was happening earlier this morning. In the very situation, I was just embarrassed how Mohsen began to interrogate me all the sudden. He forced me to leave my position as the neutral observer and researcher and take a stance. He dragged me into the picture and highlighted different conditions of possibility of transnational mobility that structure the transnational space of mobility between Tunisia and Europe in terms of social hierarchies, racialisation, and in its temporal dimension. His critical attitude threw a spotlight on the conditionalities that shape our respective mobile practices. Add to this picture the transnational trajectories of Abdellah, who moved back and forth between Tunisia and France a few decades earlier, and you end with a collage of different experiences of mobility and border-crossing

that are related to each other, all of them conditioned and shaped by the European border regime.

Abdellah's experience of transnational mobility is shaped by the post-war economic boom in Western Europe in the 1960s and 1970s and the labour migration policy that ensured the constant supply of cheap and unskilled Tunisian workforce for a growing labour market especially in France, underpinned by the close relationship between France and Tunisia, which is the heritage of the colonial past that ties the two countries together.

Mohsen's experience of transnational mobility is shaped by the effects of the 2008 financial crisis and the political responses. For a long time, Italy served as a steppingstone for Tunisian migrants to continue their migration trajectory through Europe. Italian migration laws allowed Tunisians to obtain a temporary residence permit for independent labour. It was common practice to use this permit to enter Italy legally and find work in the informal labour market and overstay the residence permit. This opportunity was closed after the financial crisis and the transformation of the informal Italian labour market. In addition, the turmoil after the fall of the Ben-Ali regime on 14 January 2011 led to a temporal and sharp increase of clandestine migration to Europe and provoked improvised short-term answers by European governments. This allowed Mohsen to escape Tunisia. Simultaneously, as a newcomer in the informal Italian labour market, he failed to establish himself and find a job. Only the establishment of Switzerland's AVR programme for Tunisian asylum seekers in the same year

allowed him to unlock his situation and move forward, although it signified a subjugation of his mobility under the rules of AVR.

My own pattern of transnational mobility is shaped by the racialised regime of differentiated mobility (see Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013). It allows people like me holding a Swiss passport to travel relatively freely between Switzerland and Tunisia with the only restriction to leave the country temporarily after three months. The only inconvenience I was facing were the few questions at the customs about my frequent entries and exits, documented by the growing number of stamps in my passport.[7]

All three experiences of transnational mobility are driven by autonomous decisions to cross border, and simultaneously they are shaped by the modern liberal nation state's desire to regulate and govern transnational mobility.

Studying the State Through the Lens of Mobility

Although this dissertation starts in Jebel Jelloud, it is not an ethnography of Tunis's banlieue and this specific working-class neighbourhood, nor is it an ethnography of Tunisian *harraga* culture and the young people who live, dream, and hope in this run-down *quartier populaire.* It is also not a dissertation about

[7] In addition, I benefitted from the political situation of the post-Ben-Ali era. The whole security apparatus was much less visible than before. Before 2011, it would have been much more complicated, even impossible, to do this type of fieldwork without catching the attention of the authorities immediately.

those who return from their adventure abroad, sometimes broken, desperate, and disillusioned, sometimes triumphant and decorated with the insignia of a successful stay abroad, where they made – compared to the ordinary norm in the neighbourhood – a fortune.

Rather, the dissertation takes the transnational mobile trajectories and the expectations of mobility as a starting point to examine state practices of control and governance. It thus adopts the analytical perspective the thesis of the autonomy of migration AoM (de Genova 2017, de Genova et al. 2018, Scheel 2019) proposes and develops an analysis of the contemporary European border regime from a standpoint of border crossings, rather than from a standpoint of demarcations and boundary making. Ethnographically, it focuses on Switzerland's programme for assisted voluntary return migration (AVR) for Tunisians and examines what I will call *the paradox of governed voluntariness* that is inscribed in this particular form of governing mobility. Switzerland realised this programme after the temporary sharp increase in the number of Tunisian asylum seekers in the turmoil following the overthrow of the long-standing Ben-Ali regime in Tunisia in 2011. The programme promoted the return of Tunisian asylum seekers and granted support for individual return project, when they revoke their asylum application in return. AVR aims at replacing forced deportation with a mix of incentives and the threat of the looming rejection of the asylum application, thus creating a permanent state of insecurity, otherwise described as deportability (de Genova 2002, Hasselberg 2016).

The paradox of governed voluntariness refers to the emerging contradictions of the liberal nation state in the governance of transnational mobility. Arendt argues that state sovereignty is most absolute in matters of transnational migration and border control (Arendt 1951: 278). For the modern liberal nation state, migration control—the sovereign control of a nation's geographical and social borders—threats the liberal promise of individual freedom, as liberal political philosophers as Carens (1995) or Cassee (2016) show. State sovereignty and liberalism thus maintain a conflicting relationship. Yet instead of a normative defence of liberalism and open borders as Carens, Cassee, and others do, this dissertation examines the dilemma from an empirical perspective. AVR programme allow a privileged insight into the emerging contradictions between migrants' mobile practices and the return migration bureaucracy's aim of a removal of "the undesirable alien" by mutual consent and without the mobilisation of brute force, which would contradict the self-understanding of the return migration bureaucrats.

Three constitutive aspects are critical for the understanding of the paradox of governed voluntariness. First, it is imperative to understand the genealogy of the transnational space of mobility between Europe and Tunisia. It is on the one hand shaped by the colonial past and the post-world war economic boom in Western Europe, as chapter 3 explores. On the other hand, the organisation of the AVR programme privileges certain forms of transnational mobility, while inhibiting others (chapter 4). Second, the dissertation analyses the imaginations of mobility and return of Tunisian migrants and migration bureaucrats in order

to understand the expectations and images (chapter 5). And third, it explores ethnographically how the governance of voluntariness is produced in everyday bureaucratic practices (chapter 6).

From Transnational Migration Trajectories to the Governance of Voluntariness

The dissertation starts with a theoretical and a methodological chapter that answer the question how to study border regimes. In chapter 2, I introduce the theoretical framework. The first part of this chapter is dedicated to the discussion of the notion of border regimes (Tsianos and Karakayalı 2010; Hess 2012; Mezzadra and Neilson 2013;). It introduces the term as an analytical tool to understand how borders are organised through institutions, practices, and narratives. It then compares it to an alternative approach that can be found in the anthropology of policy. It explains why I prefer the border regime approach over a border policy approach, although they are closely related to each other and sometimes overlapping. The chapter continues with a critical discussion of the concept of the autonomy of migration AOM (Mezzadra 2007; Bojadžijev and Karakayalı 2007; Scheel 2015) and explains why I prefer *the analytical notion of AOM* and reject its synthetical notion. The chapter concludes with a discussion how the notion of the border regime and the AOM thesis are related to the concept of the transnational social field, as discussed in the work of Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004).

Chapter 3 discusses the dissertation's methodology. It introduces the extended case method as the point of reference for the research design, drawing on the work of Buroway (1991, 1998) and Gluckman (1961). The chapter includes a brief discussion of the possibilities and pitfalls of biographical interviews as a research method in the context of undocumented migration, and it critically reviews the epistemological status and empirical value of (official) documents as artefacts for ethnographic research in a research context that is characterised by the attempt of migrants to escape state control and the gaze of the state in general

Chapter 4 and 5 sketch the transnational space of migration in its historical perspective (chapter 4) and through the concrete and everyday experiences and biographies of six Tunisian migrants (chapter 5). The aim of chapter 4 is to explore how this particular transnational space of migration is structured by historical developments and legal frameworks. The chapter argues that historical transnational connections continue to structure the contemporary transnational space of migration. This chapter thus embeds the recent phenomenon of clandestine migration between Tunisia and Europe in a broader perspective. It shows that transnational migration is not a recent and only short episode in Tunisian history, but rather accompanies the formation of Tunisian society over centuries.

In contrast to the historical perspective, chapter 5 explores the transnational space of migration through the concrete experience and the migration biographies of six male Tunisians. It thus adopts the thesis of the autonomy of

migration AOM in its analytical dimension and explores border through the experiences and practices of the mobile subjects. The focus on migration biographies allows to examine border policies through migrants' individual experiences. Two ideas guide the specific selection of migration biographies. Firstly, in order to explore the effects of border regimes on individual migration trajectories, the sample aims at representing the most diverse experiences of clandestine migration. For this reason, the sample includes not only the examples of successful escapes, but also two migration biographies of young Tunisians who were – for various reasons – denied exercising their transnational mobility. These two cases invite the reader to explore how some individuals are completely excluded from the possibility of transnational mobility, although they would consider themselves also as *harragas*. Furthermore, these two migration biographies allow us to explore transnational mobile practices and the experience of border regimes and border making not only from an inside perspective, but also from an outside perspective, where the *harraga* is the imagination of an escape from suffering, oppression, and denial. And secondly, the sample aims at a historical comparison within the limited possibilities narrated migration biographies offer. Thus, it includes the case of Abdellah, the broker and gatekeeper we already encountered briefly in the introduction. His migration biography serves as a contrast to the other contemporary migration biographies of the young male clandestine Tunisian migrants. As this chapter argues, rather than a change in migration practices, we witness a change in the governance of

precarious labour migration, and how clandestine migration is discursively framed.

The following two chapters 6 and 7 change perspective and look from a different angle on mobility, departure, and return. In contrast to the previous chapter, both chapters narrow down the focus to state practices and – more precisely – to one specific type of migration management; Switzerland's programme for assisted voluntary return migration for Tunisian migrants. Chapter 6 asks how the state sees migration, thereby drawing on James Scott's influential work on the state and the question how administrative tools to measure, plan, and classify the world is shaping this world at the same time (see Scott 1998). The chapter features two ethnographic vignettes. One explores how flowcharts represent the perfect imagination of migration management. The other examines how the state assesses and imagines a successful return within the programme for assisted voluntary return. These two vignettes explore how migration regimes are shaped by the way the state sees migration. This chapter focuses exclusively on Switzerland's return migration regimes for Tunisian asylum seekers. In particular, it asks how the state imagines the asylum bureaucracy as a comprehensive system, and it explores how it defines success in the context of so-called voluntary return.

In contrast to the previous chapter with its attention to representation and discourses, chapter 7 focuses on state practices. Drawing on the ethnographic material on Switzerland's programme for assisted voluntary return migration, it

focuses on three specific waypoints in the governance of return migration. Firstly, it examines the return migration consultation in Switzerland. Secondly, it explores how the so-called compulsory business training course of the return migration program addresses return migrants as self-responsible and economically rational subjects. And finally, it explores how power relations emerge in the everyday encounter between return migration bureaucrats and return migrants during the realisation of the migrants' AVR projects.

The concluding chapter 8 brings these different strands together and comes back to the initial contradiction of the liberal nation state that is laid bare in the governance of so-called voluntary return migration. It returns to the argument that the governance of return migration oscillates between compassion and repression as two principles of governance. Drawing on the work of Graeber (2012; 2015), it argues that the return migration bureaucracy is a prime example of structural violence. In other words, it is not a structure that exercises violence, but a structure that is based on violence. With respect to the work of Fassin (2005; 2007; 2012) on humanitarianism, the chapter concludes that return migration bureaucracies shift the focus from the question of asylum rights to the issue of compassion or assistance. This transforms the migratory subject from a bearer of rights and obligation to a beneficiary of help on the one hand. At the same time, it mobilises the subject as a self-responsible and economically rational subject. This substitutes the image of the subject as a bearer of rights with the image of the subject as an economically rational subject.

As a conclusion, the dissertation suggests reading migration bureaucracies as a distinct form of bureaucracy. In contrast to an ordinary bureaucracy, which consists in the governance of a public good according to the imagined mutual consent, migration bureaucracies govern the boundaries of the commonwealth and are therefore adversary vis-à-vis the governed subjects by nature. This leads to the diagnoses that in the light of the governance of transnational migration and mobility, the contradictions of the promise of the liberal nation state emerge in full detail. An anthropology of the state should thus explore the state from a standpoint of mobility. Eventually, the question is then not who transgresses naturalised borders, but who crosses pathways of mobility through bordering processes.

II. Studying the Governance of Mobility

This dissertation explores the governance of mobility and return. On a theoretical level, it does this with the help of the two concepts of the border regime and the thesis of the autonomy of migration AOM. On an empirical level, it studies the governance of mobility and return through the analysis of Switzerland's programme for assisted voluntary return migration for Tunisian migrants. With the notion of governance of mobility and return I refer to a specific aspect of the state bureaucracy. I understand governance "as the administration of access to and provision of rights, services and goods that imply also the definition of categories of inclusion and entitlements that are explicit or implicit in governmental practices" (Eckert et al. 2012: 14). The definition of categories of inclusion and entitlement implies at the same time its counterpart; the definition of categories of exclusion and denial. This definition of governance does not focus on migration bureaucracies in particular. Rather it provides a

general definition of state governance. The regulation of the access to rights, goods, and services is of particular salience, as migration bureaucracies do not administer any kind of rights, goods, and services. Mobility and border crossings are particular objects of governance. They hinge on citizenship, which can be described as a right of a second order, or, to use the words of Hannah Arendt (1951: 267-302), as a "right to have rights", as she wrote with regard to human rights. As such, migration bureaucracies have a particular object of governance. It is simultaneously a resource regulated by practices of governance and a mean that allows the access to (state-provided) resources. This means that transnational mobility is a necessary condition to participate in rights, services and goods, which are distributed unequally on a global scale. This global unequal distribution is regulated or governed through the unequal distribution of possibilities of transnational mobility, more precisely in the attempts to exclude some from the possibilities of transnational mobility. Migration bureaucracies are the instances that regulate the access to the fundamental right to mobility.

I use the two concepts of the border regime and the thesis of the autonomy of migration AOM to understand the governance of mobility and return. These seemingly contradicting concepts have different orientations, as they contain two different conceptualisations and ideas of the migratory subject. As I will argue throughout this chapter, these two conceptualisations of migratory subjectivity are not mutually exclusive, rather they refer to the "totalising and individualising dimension" (Foucault 1995, Shore and Wright 2015a, 2015b) of the governance of transnational mobility. The combination of these two ideas helps us to

understand the production of migratory subjectivity in the governance of return migration that is enacted between compassion and repression (Fassin 2005).

The notion of the border regime and the thesis of the AOM refer to two opposed perspectives, echoing one of the fundamental debates in social theory; the question how structure and agency are related and constitute each other (Bourdieu 1972, Giddens 1979, Callinicos 2004). The notion of the border regime refers to the structural aspect and to state institutions. It highlights the power and domination of the state. In contrast, the thesis of the AOM refers to the migrant as a mobile subject and highlights its agency. I will argue that this blunt emphasis of an opposition between the two concept is a dead end. Instead of a confrontation of these two approaches, I suggest asking the question in a different way. Therefore, this chapter aims at a combination of these two approaches in order to grasp at the same time the constraining power of the state through its border institutions and practices, and the migratory subjectivity with its tendency to escape this state control.

The first part of this chapter revisits the notion of the border regime, and it explains the specific approach to this concept in this dissertation. The second part turns its attention to the thesis of the autonomy of migration AOM. Here, it stresses out the theoretical value of the autonomy of migration as a heuristic approach to study border regimes and clandestine migration practices. At the same time, I argue why I reject an all too close conjunction between mobile practices and political struggles, which is the tendency in many AOM

approaches to the study of migration. In short, while the dissertation acknowledges and values the AOM as an analytical lens to explore mobility and state (border) practices, it rejects it as a synthetical notion. The third part brings the two theoretical concepts together and sketches how they allow to conceptualise the migratory subject within the field of (state) power, domination, subjugation, resistance, and escape.

Border Regimes

Often more a vague point of reference, rather than an analytical concept, the term border regime describes a set of institutions that operate in a similar logic. In other words, the concept of border regime is the attempt for a broader and more inclusive reading of border institutions. It allows to include further institutions than those who are in general associated with the border as a demarcation line between two states, or the idea of the border as the limits of state's sovereignty (e.g. Sassen 1996; Walters 2002; Rumford 2006; Parker and Adler-Nisse 2012; Parker and Vaughan 2012). The border police, customs, walls, and barriers are important features of the border regime, but more subtle forms of border practices and boundary-making are constitutive for the border regime as well.

In the European context of critical migration studies, the term border regime is an answer to the highly criticised metaphor of the fortress Europe (e.g. Euskirchen et al. 2007). As Hess and Tsianos (2010) argue, this metaphor is

based on the problematic hypothesis of repression and includes a hypnotized gaze on the border, where the excess of border violence emerges in its most brutal form, while simultaneously ignoring the manifold practices and institutions of border practices and border-making that happen in the shadow of the "border spectacle" (de Genova 2013).[8] While the fortress Europe metaphor tends towards a functionalist reading of borders and border institutions, a border regime approach focuses more on the contradictions, inconsistencies, and frictions.

However, the notion of the border regime contains more than a broader focus on state institutions that contribute to the making of borders. Rather, the term highlights the interplay between institutions, practices, and discourses. At the same time, it emphasises the contradictory character of border regimes. Border regimes are not the result of a single and unifying logic or strategy. This results in an approach that is opposed to a reading of the border one could describe as functionalist. The analytical power of the border regime approach is precisely in the combination of institutions, practices, and discourses. This follows Giuseppe Sciortino's (2004) definition of a migration regime:

> *"[A] country's migration regime is usually not the outcome of consistent planning. It is rather a mix of implicit*

[8] For a detailed critique of the concept of the fortress Europe, see also Tsianos and Karakayalı (2010).

> *conceptual frames, generations of turf wars among bureaucracies and waves after waves of 'quick fix' to emergencies, triggered by changing political constellations of actors. The notion of a regime allows rooms for gaps, ambiguities, and outright straints: the life of a regime is the result of continuos repair work through practices" (Sciortino 2004:32f).*

In this quote, Sciortino highlights three dimensions of the border regime; institutions, practices, discourses. The first dimension of border regimes is its institutions. Sciortino uses the term bureaucracies, which is slightly misleading in two different ways. Bureaucracies are not reducible to institutions, and the term institutions includes state entities that lack fundamental characteristics of bureaucracies; e.g. border guards. Heyman (1995), for example, argues that a state bureaucracy is more than the assemblage of institutions. Rather, it describes organised power that is able to orchestrate complex societies and various contexts. Heyman's notion of bureaucracy would include practices as well; a separate and distinct aspect in Sciortino's definition of border regimes.

Border institutions are not necessarily limited to state institutions, nor are they limited to institutions that are directly linked to the geographical border. Concerning the first point, it means that non-governmental institutions might be considered as border institutions as well. Therefore, in this research I consider organisation such as NGOs focusing on aspects of migration, refugee relief

organisations, the UNHCR, or the International Organisation of Migration IOM – a key actor in the organisation of return migration – as border institutions as well, although they are not part of the state apparatus in the narrow sense of the term. Furthermore, it also includes state institutions far away from the geographical border, for example the cantonal return migration offices, as important institutions in the organisation of borders and border-making.

This disconnection of border institutions from the geographical location at the border and from the state, creates the problem of the defining element of border institutions. To put it bluntly, we have to find an alternative minimal definition of border institutions that overcomes the limitations discussed above. As a solution, I suggest defining border institutions from the practices they exercise and from the narratives they deploy. Reduced to a short and handy definition; they are institutions that attempt to order people's transnational mobile practices in the transnational space of mobility. In this perspective, border institutions are identifiable as such only through the effects they produce. This connects them directly to the second dimension in Sciortino's definition of the border regime; the border practices.

Border practices as the second dimension of border regimes organise and shape human mobility in the transnational space of migration. Border practices inhibit, block, accelerate, or rearrange human mobility. It is important to take into account enabling and restricting practices at the same time. In other words, it is not a binary question of access and denial, but rather the production of mobility

(Bigo and Guild 2005). More general, these differentiations produce inequalities of rights, risks, and movements (Pallitto and Heyman 2008:319). Often the practices of border regimes do not prevent or stop human mobility in the transnational social space of migration entirely. Rather, border regimes delay or speed up human mobility. This regime of differentiated mobility is similar to the concept of differentiated citizenship (Hindess 1993) with differentiated inclusion and exclusion (Bosniak 2006) or differentiated rights (e.g. Wicker 2004; Holston 2009, 2011).

This production of differentiated mobility has temporal and spatial effects. Concerning the temporal effects, borders do not seal off unwanted immigration movements entirely (Tsianos Karakayalı 2010).[9] Rather, they delay or speed up migration trajectories. The delaying of one's migration trajectory and the feeling of being stuck is one of the most drastic experiences as I learnt during fieldwork from my informants. The physical suffering, dire poverty, hunger, or similar hardship was rarely mentioned as an issue by the informants when talking about their migration trajectories. Instead, all the dead time wasted on the road, the phases of waiting and uncertainty were repeatedly identified as one of the most exhausting aspects of clandestine mobility. In many cases, waiting becomes some sort of a leitmotiv for the clandestine Tunisian migrants during their migration

[9] This is a further argument against the fortress Europe metaphor that implies the picture of the border as a hermetic and impenetrable wall.

trajectories between Tunisia and Europe.[10] This waiting has many faces. It is a waiting for a next opportunity to continue one's migration trajectory, it is a waiting for a decision of the asylum bureaucracy, or it is a waiting until one has collected the necessary means to pay for the next move and cross the next border (see also Lucht 2015). Therefore, waiting is experienced as an alienation of the time from oneself.

The spatial dimension of border practices is more obvious than the temporal dimension, yet surprisingly in the narrated experience of my interlocutors, it is of minor significance. Compared to the temporal effects of border practices, the spatial effects may seem less important. With respect to spatiality, the work of borders rearranges and orders migration trajectories in the space. Under the paradigm of the spatial turn, geographers, and human and social scientists have explored how border practices transform and shape space (e.g. Houtum et al 2004). The border draws a demarcation line between spaces that are allowed and spaces that are forbidden.

The third dimension of border regimes concerns narratives and discourses. They play a crucial role in the constitution and organisation of border regimes. The mobilising power of discourses allows to orchestrate and align practices in a perspective of borders, of inclusion and exclusion. Differentiated mobility or

[10] Existential anthropology (e.g. Hage 2009), but also other ethnographies (e.g. Elliot 2016) have explored the motive of waiting in the migratory experience.

differentiated exclusion requires the establishment of different categories such as refugees, labour migrants, expats, and tourists. Some of these categories are legal, as they describe a precise legal status, others are more vague and sanction certain types of mobility as either welcomed or undesired. Bauman (1996) explored these differences with the distinction "tourists" and "vagabonds", a distinction that refers more to the moral evaluation of different types of mobility than to a strict legal status. Therefore, this categorisation is not descriptive, but has a prescriptive and normative character. The continuum of practices of human mobility is divided into discrete categories that allow to treat individuals differently according to the different categories.[11] This categorisation might change over time. Concerning transnational migration of Tunisians, we will discover later through the narrated migration biographies of my interlocutors that the very same practices of mobility were once framed as labour migration in the 1960s and 1970s, and are now considered as asylum migration, or, in the public discourse, as so-called illegal migration.

In particular the discursive dimension of border regimes brings the concept close to an anthropology of policy. This is an alternative concept to approach the governance of transnational mobility with a stronger focus on the discursive aspect. Shore and Wright (1997, 2011) coined this anthropological approach to policy, while Però (2011) applied this concept to the field of migration and

[11] See Handelman (2004) on the logics of categorisation and the ordering of a continuum into distinct categories.

mobility. Shore and Wright (1997: 4) identify three main modes of policy; policy as language and power, policy as cultural agent, and policy as political. In the context of this dissertation, the focus will be on the mode of policy as language and power. This adds particular emphasis to one aspect of the border regime approach that is often neglected, because of its strong focus on institutions and – to a lesser degree – practices.

Let me conclude this discussion with the question how the approach to the concept of border regime as sketched above shapes the understanding of borders. The discussion has highlighted three dimensions of the border regime; institutions, practices, and discourses and narratives. The discussion of these three dimensions made clear that an encompassing notion of the border has to deterritorialise this particular concept. Border can no longer be understood as the geopolitical line in the sand that marks and delimits the spatial extension of state sovereignty (Rumford 2006, 2012; Balibar 2004, 2009). Instead, border occur both *beyond* and *within* the geographical borders of a state. Instead of a concrete line in space, borders should be understood as a mode of governance that structures the texture of the social fabric through differentiated mobility in a transnational space of mobility with overlapping state sovereignties. This does not imply to reduce borders to its discursive aspect. Rather, it is a reminder to look beyond the line and detach our hypnotised gaze from the geographical border where the "border spectacle" (de Genova 2010, 2013) emerges in its most graphic form in general.

Autonomy of Migration as an Analytical Tool

In this dissertation, I juxtapose the concept of border regimes to the thesis of the autonomy of migration AOM. The notion of the border regime focuses on the infrastructure of borders, the practices, and the discourses, yet it tends to neglect the role of migrants as subjects. With their practices and discourses, migrants subvert, enforce, and restructure borders. The AOM thesis provides us with a distinct analytical focus on these expressions of migrants' subjectivity. As such, it offers a productive perspective to look on migration, or, more general, on mobility and reflect how the mobility of migrants is connected to border regimes. Understood as an analytical perspective and not as a synthetic proposition, the thesis of the AOM reframes the interdependencies between migrants' border crossing practices and the border regime. Thus, it focuses on the sites of struggles over mobility. Furthermore, the thesis of the AOM is an emphatic reminder that mobility is an essential condition of human life (de Genova 2012).

In critical migration studies, the thesis of the AOM has become a strong point of reference for the study of transnational mobility. In particular the body of literature on this topic in German has grown in the second half of the first decade of this Century (e.g. Karakayalı and Tsianos 2005; TRANSIT MIGRATION Forschungsgruppe 2007; Bojadžijev and Karakayalı 2007; Scheel 2013, 2015; cf. Benz and Schwenken 2005; Binder, Ege and Färber 2011). Drawing on the idea of autonomy as developed in the *Operaismo* movement in Italy since the late

1950s, the thesis of the AOM emphasises transitional mobile practices of migrants as the driving force for shaping and changing border regimes. In this sub-chapter I suggest to understand the thesis of the AOM not as a synthetic proposition, but rather as an analytical lens or tool to study transnational human mobility. This approach allows to de-naturalise borders and show how they are constructed and contested. Therefore, I consider the thesis of the AOM a fruitful starting point to explore struggles over mobility and the right to the freedom of transnational mobility, yet I reject the all too quick explanation of migrants' mobile practices as explicit or implicit expressions of struggles and resistance against border regimes that is inherent in many studies based on the thesis of the AOM. These studies have the tendency to overemphasise the insurgent potential of transnational mobility. It misses to take into account that contested mobility is in many cases much more a struggle for recognition and inclusion into the border regime, than the resistance against it.

The following part begins with the characterisation of the thesis of the AOM and discusses its main elements. In particular, it acknowledges its analytical potential. It then continues with a critique of the notion of resistance that takes a (too) prominent place in the application of this concept. It discusses the pitfalls and shortcomings of the dichotomy between the oppressive border regime on the one hand, and subversive transnational border practices as struggles for the freedom of movement, no matter whether they are organised or unorganised, implicit or explicit. This discussion shows that the thesis of the AOM tends to

overemphasise migration as a per se political practice that questions the social and economic status quo.

In order to save the explanatory power of the concept of the autonomy of migration, I suggest reducing it to its core: an analytical lens that allows us to describe the interdependencies between migration and border control practices from the perspective of migration. As a result, it helps to decentre and de-naturalise the perspective on borders as given and immutable entities. As a conclusion, I suggest using the term appropriation of mobility instead of the term struggles.

Moulier-Boutang describes the thesis of the AOM as „eine Methode, ein Ausgangspunkt, ein heuristisches Modell" (2007:169, a method, a starting point, a heuristic model; D.L.). This description captures perfectly the core idea of the thesis of the AOM. Firstly, it points out that AOM is rather a method than a theory. In other words, it is an analytical tool to study transnational mobility. Secondly, AOM takes mobility and mobile practices for granted and explores borders and migration control from a standpoint of mobility. This change in perspective opens new ways of thinking about border and migration control. Borders and border practices are no longer the unquestioned norm that is just given, but contingent entities that are always in the making and under constant threat. In this perspective, mobility is not the exception from a norm based on immobility and stability. Instead of questioning why (transnational) mobility exists and searching for explanations, the AOM invites the researcher

to turn the perspective, asking why there are borders and border control practices at all.

And as a third aspect in Moulier-Boutang's definition of the autonomy of migration, mobility precedes any attempts of its control. This is not a synthetic proposition or a description of a historical or social fact, but rather a heuristic model that suggests a particular approach to the study of migration and its control. Following Bojadžijev (2011), the thesis of the AOM as a heuristic model changes the perspective on migration, as it adopts the perspective of migration itself. The study of migrants' mobile practices – their compliance with and subversion of border control practices – helps to understand border regimes, as they highlight the conditions of possibilities of mobility and immobility.

Beyond Moulier-Boutang's discussion of the AOM, de Genova (2010) highlights a further aspect of the thesis of the AOM. He insists that mobility is an intrinsic quality of human beings. As such, mobility is the figure par excellence of life and its barest essential condition (de Genova 2010:39; see also de Genova 2012). This does not qualify mobility as a human right, nor as a natural right per se. Instead, it emphasises mobility as a fundamental figure of life, preceding its juridification in any form, as de Genova insists. This understanding of migration as an intrinsic quality of human life urges for an approach that adopts the perspective of mobility as a starting point for any investigation of migration and border regimes.

Beyond an analytical tool for the investigation of migration and border regimes, it has to be reminded that the thesis of the AOM takes a political stance as well. Garelli and Tazzioli (2013) diagnose the consolidation of migration studies as an interdisciplinary discipline, yet this institutionalisation goes along with a depoliticization, as the two authors deplore. In their defence of the thesis of the AOM, they locate the origins of the idea of autonomy in the Italian *Operaismo* movement and argue that research based on the paradigm of AOM follows a similar impetus; research and militant action build a continuum, and research questions emerge from concrete political struggles. The *Operaismo* movement (workerist communism) emerged in the 1950s and 1960 as a social and intellectual movement that emphasises the subjectivity of the workers as the driving force of history over the productive forces (see also Hardt and Negri 2001). It is a reversal the Marxian model of progress that considers the productive forces as the driving forces of change. Furthermore, the notion of autonomy in the *Operaismo* transforms Marx's classical bipolar model of the antagonism of power between capital and labour into a multi-vocal and de-centred model of power. This led to a radical different description of domination and resistance; widely popularised in the image of the rhizome by Deleuze and Guattari (1987). Any form of hegemonic and subversive power has no longer a centre, but only "nodes" and "intersections" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). This pluralisation of power and resistance is at the core of the notion of autonomy.

Translated into critical migration studies, the thesis of the AOM insists that transnational mobile practices precede any attempts of border control; the latter

are always reactions to the former (de Genova 2013a: 11). This heuristic change in perspective decentres the well-established assumption of mobility as an exception. It leads to a strong research focus on migrants' struggles (Papadopoulos et al. 2008, Tazzioli 2015). Resistance against the European border regimes, or more general, the resistance against any form of prevention of human mobility is considered as an expression of the autonomy of migration.

It is not necessary that this resistance against forms of inhibition of human mobility becomes a conscious and explicitly political form. Bojadžijev and Karakayalı (2007) suggest that the migrants' struggles against border regimes extend beyond the explicit forms of political struggles. Political rallies and protests against Frontex or against the conclusion of the EU/ Turkey deal on the deportation of refugees arriving on Greek islands back to Turkey in 2016, or the famous protest camp against deportations at the Oranienplatz in Berlin between 2012 and 2014 are only the most visible forms of migration struggles. In the perspective of the thesis of the AOM, the simple fact that thousands of migrants are crossing borders without asking for permission is also an expression of a political movement in the literal sense. Mundane practices that undermine border regimes and cross prescribed paths of mobility are part of these struggles for human mobility without any conditions.

Three objections can be brought forward against the thesis of the AOM and this particular reading of resistance. This is first the overemphasis of the notions of struggles and resistance against the border regime. Second, it is the generalised

assumption that migration always and automatically implies a perspective 'from below', as it implies that the migrant is the figure of the subaltern par excellence in global border regimes. And third, while it acknowledges the de-centred and multivocal character of human mobility as an insurgent force for the transformation of migration control, it tends to transform the border regime into a uniform and united system; a hegemonic apparatus opposed to practices of mobility as a whole. This eventually contradicts Moulier-Boutang's notion of the border regime with its emphasis on frictions and contradictions as its constitutive part. Let me consider these three objections in more detail.

First, the thesis of the autonomy of migration has the tendency to overemphasise migrants' struggles against the border regime. In this perspective, virtually any mundane practice that contradicts or subverts at first glance a certain aspect of border and migration control is interpreted as a subversion of the border regime. It fails to identify criteria that allow us to distinguish between mobile practices as struggles over the freedom of movements from other mobile practices that do not belong to this category. As we will see later in the discussion of the empirical material, the mere fact of ignoring the explicit rules of mobility is not a sufficient indication that this specific practice is a contestation of the border regime. It ignores the possibility that practices, which do not comply with the explicit rules of mobility and border crossing, might be in complete alignment with the logics of the dominant border regime. It should be regarded as an open question, whether mobile practices are subversive and have the tendency to destabilise and

transform border regime, or – to the contrary – whether they only reaffirm and strengthen the dominant mode of control of mobility.

However, there are attempts for a more nuanced conceptualisation of the relationship between mobile practices and struggles against or contestations of the border regime. Bojadžijev and Karakayalı (2007) and Bojadžijev (2011) for example emphasise that mobile practices are indeed on the one hand an escape from oppressive structures in one context. At the same time, these trajectories might lead directly into new relationship of dependencies and subjugation under the conditions of global capitalism. This approach takes up the dialectics of mobility as described by Marx with regard to the Irish agricultural workers in the 19th Century (Marx 1972: 726-740). He shows how the rural proletariat of Ireland was set free from semi-feudal dependencies in the 19th Century, turning them into labour migrants – only to end up in the growing industrialising cities in England as the new industrial reserve army. Marx reminds us that this escape from semi-feudal agrarian dependencies is not at all a liberation, but only an escape from one type of subordination and dependencies into another one. Some of the migration biographies I will discuss later in this dissertation show exactly this dialectic.

Second, the thesis of the AOM tends to ignore the fact that under the condition of global capitalism in world society, in many cases forms of resistance might be rather practices of immobility than practices of mobility. For example, high-skilled transnational migration of the global elite is perfectly covered and even

supported and facilitated by border regimes. It is neither a struggle against the border regime, nor within the border regime. To the contrary, it is a strategy of mobility that is not only legit, but even desired and required. Overemphasising the aspect of struggles neglects that the overwhelming majority of mobile practices do not relate to struggles against or within the border regimes in any ways – neither as implicit struggles, nor as explicit and politically organised struggles. This shows that the research focus on mobile practices does not automatically imply a perspective "from below". The study of the mobile practices of the global elite would be far from such an attempt of "studying up" (Nader 1972).

At this point, I would like to take the critique a step further, focusing explicitly on the socio-economic aspect of transnational mobility. In their critical discussion of the thesis of the AOM, Çağlar and Glick Schiller (2011) acknowledge that this particular perspective aims at a position beyond the victimisation of migrants on the one hand, and the normalisation of migration through the heroisation of migrants and their uncritical integration into a dominant migration regime of circular migration on the other hand. However, Çağlar and Glick Schiller (2011:149) argue that the thesis of the AOM understands migrants as one single and autonomous category. Their critique is that it neglects the conditions that create distinctions and similarities among migrants and link them sometimes more closely to non-migrants. This reductionist tendency is contrary to the initial intention of the thesis of the

autonomy of migration that aims to capture the excessive and uncontrollable aspect of migration.

The third objection against the thesis of the AOM is directed against its notion of the border regime. Similar to the mobile practices of migrants that are diverse, chaotic, and do not follow any single and unified logic, the same is true for the border regime. Although the term might be easily misread as a monolithic power bloc, the strength of this concept is precisely in its emphasis on the frictions and contradictions. These frictions and contradictions should not be read as expressions of a dysfunctional system, but rather taken as a starting point to analyse their constitutive role and formative power of the border regime. Otherwise, we would end up again in the misleading image of the fortress, as expressed in the popular image of the "fortress Europe", often strategically mobilised in political discourses. Above, in the discussion of Sciortino's notion of the regime I emphasise the contradicting, and ambivalent character of border regimes that includes a whole range of actors, contradicting practices, and ideological frames. Border regimes are in constant transformation and adopt to changing political and social constellations. The thesis of the AOM with its narrow focus on struggles against border regimes tends to transform the regime into a system. Sciortino (2007) insists on the sharp distinction between a regime and a system. Only the latter is uniform and follows one single logic. Reading migration practices exclusively in the perspective of struggles against the border regime does not take into account sufficiently the contradicting aspects of a regime. Enabling and restricting border practices co-exist, and they are not

mutually exclusive. Rather this co-presence is constitutive for border regimes. This means that we as researchers should refrain from any attempt to identify a master narrative or a main strategy that unifies and includes all practices, conceptual frames, and institutions of border regimes.

As a consequence, it is impossible to define certain migratory practices per se as insurgent or subversive. Although they might ignore the explicit rules of transnational mobility, such practices might be perfectly compliant with other aspects of the border regime. The very same practice of transnational mobility can have a destabilising effect and a stabilising effect on the border regime at the same time. As a result, the thesis of the AOM that emphasises the aspect of resistance and struggles tends to reduce the complexity, inconsistencies, and contradictions of the border regime and sketches it as a uniform system following one single logic.

However, although these three points are serious objections against the thesis of the AOM, they do not render it expendable. Instead of rejecting it, I value the thesis of the AOM as a productive analytical lens to study transnational human mobility. Although – based on the ethnographic material – I am critical with regard to the subversive potential of transnational mobility, the analytical power of the thesis of the AOM allows me to de-centre and denaturalise borders and border control practices. As I will show throughout the text, there are many moments within the transnational trajectories of my informants, where their mobile practices do contain glimpses of autonomy. Their trajectories are not

simply responses to incentives, opportunities, or obstacles of mobility. Newly emerging border control practices are indeed in many cases reactions to autonomous mobile practices; the programme for assisted voluntary return migration for Tunisian migrants is just a prime example for such a reaction to these autonomous mobile practices, as we will discover later. At the same time, it would be misleading to read these transnational trajectories as expressions of implicit or explicit struggles over mobilities.

This last remark is of particular importance with regard to the dissertation's main concern; the governance of return migration. I am sceptical to take it as a given fact that migrants' transnational mobile practices are per se expressions of forms of resistance or struggles against border regimes. Some of these strategies do indeed undermine and subvert the border regime, yet others convene entirely with it, although they do not comply with the explicit rules of transnational mobility.

In their critique of the thesis of the AOM, Benz and Schwenken (2005) suggest replacing the term autonomy with *Eigensinnigkeit*.[12] The aim of this suggestion is to emphasise that mobility and its control maintain a closer interdependency than the thesis of the AOM acknowledges. At the same time, *Eigensinnigkeit* shall be a reminder of the ever-present moment of excess and uncontrollability of

[12] The German notion *Eigensinnigkeitk* can be roughly translated as perseverance.

migration. The problem of this approach is that it disconnects mobility and its control entirely from the aspect of dominance and power. Instead of replacing autonomy with *Eigensinnigkeit* as Benz and Schwenken suggest on the one hand, and instead of jumping to the conclusion that migration means per se a form of struggle as the thesis of the AOM does on the other hand, I suggest to read migrants' mobile strategies as forms of *appropriation of mobility*. In contrast to the term struggle, appropriation does not imply the notion of a counterstrategy against the border regime. Appropriation preserves the idea of autonomy but avoids juxtaposing mobile practices to forms of control of transnational mobility. For example, when a Tunisian asylum seeker decides to abandon the asylum procedure and continue to live in Switzerland as a so-called *sans-papier*, his practice can be read as "disregarding the rules of obedience" (de Genova 2013b). At the same time, as we will see later in more detail, it perfectly aligns with the logic of the asylum bureaucracy. This logic consists in the attempt to decrease the number of asylum seekers with virtually no chance of a granting of asylum. With regard to this perspective, the migrant's practice does not contest this particular logic of the border regime, because he disappears from official statistics and does no longer exist in the hegemonic view of the state. The notion of appropriation emphasises that even under the conditions of an extreme power inequality, transnational mobile practices are self-determined choices. At the same time, the notion is a reminder that the structuring forces do not remain static but might be transformed through these transnational mobile practices. In contrast to the thesis of the AOM, the notion of the appropriation of mobility

is more sceptical of the emancipatory potential of migrants' transnational mobile practices.

As a conclusion of this discussion of the thesis of the AOM, I would like to retain the following two points. Firstly, I suggest reading the thesis of the autonomy of migration as an analytical tool instead of a synthetic proposition. This means that the analysis of border regimes is developed from the perspective of mobility and migration. It further includes to take as a starting point of analysis migrants' agency. And secondly, I read migrants' transnational mobile practices in terms of appropriation of mobility. It is an appropriation that might be directed against dominant patterns of mobility, or it might be an appropriation that does not question dominant border regimes at all.

Border Regimes, Autonomy, and State Violence

The last part of this chapter brings together the two conceptual strands of the border regime perspective and the thesis of the AOM. It thereby focuses on the production of the migratory subject in the context of the border regime. The concept of the border regime explains in a Foucauldian perspective how migrants' subjectivity is produced. The thesis of the AOM is a reminder that the figure of the migrant as a mobile subject always retains an aspect that exceeds and escapes any attempts of control and subjugation and thereby disregards the rules of obedience (de Genova 2013b:155).

Many critical migration studies take a Foucauldian framework as a point of reference for the analysis of the production of subjectivity in the context of border regimes (e.g. Tazzioli 2013), although the relationship of state borders and governance was never an issue in Foucault's own work, as Walters (2011) reminds. For these critical migration studies, the important point of reference is Foucault's lecture on governmentality (Foucault 2004). I suggest a reading of the agency of migrants that does not rely on a Foucauldian framework with its emphasis on governmentality. Taking governmentality as a starting point to explore the production of migrants' subjectivity tends to neglect that that the whole border regime as such operates on the basis of sheer violence. However, with respect to the governance of so-called voluntary return migration, the issue of power and state-sanctioned violence is eminently important. The discussion of the empirical material will show in detail how the return migration bureaucracy is intimately linked to its counterpart; forced deportation. Therefore, it is indispensable to take into account the issue of state-sanctioned violence and how it constitutes the governance of so-called voluntary return. Castañeda (2010), de Genova (2010), Drotbohn (2012) and others show in their work how the governance of undocumented migrants operates against the backdrop of the threat of deportation.

As mentioned above, borders, (transnational) mobility, and migration control in general are not an explicit issue in Foucault's work (Walters 2011, de Genova 2013b). Even in the later period of his work, when Foucault turns to the study of governmentality, borders as governmental institutions are not an explicit

subject of his discussions. Rather, Foucault's work focuses on processes of governmentality *within* the modern nation state. This "methodological nationalism" (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003) tends to render invisible the work of borders. Migration control does not appear as a potential institution of governmentality. This seems to be a blind spot in Foucault's reflection on governmentality, as borders and border-making are the necessary conditions for the deployment of governmental techniques, but they are themselves not part of it. Jessop notes that in the later period of Foucault the complex of "sovereignty-territory-security moved out to the margins of Foucault's theoretical concerns" (Jessop 2011:61). Disciplinary power becomes an issue of marginal importance, although the relationship between the threat of explicit state violence, the use of state violence, and techniques of governmentality seems to be of fundamental importance. Simultaneously to the disappearance of the issue of disciplinary power in Foucault's work and his exclusive interest in techniques of governmentality, we can discover the re-emergence of the state as a leitmotif for the study of society. This leads to a surprising result. Foucault's work returns to the state, but without the aspect of disciplinary power that seems to be so fundamental for any understanding of the state. This missing aspect of disciplinary power –state violence in other words – is a serious problem for the study of the governance of so-called voluntary return, as the dialectics between voluntariness and the looming threat of state violence is at the very core of the operation of the programmes for so-called voluntary return migration.

For this reason, I suggest reading so-called voluntary return against the backdrop of the threat of concrete physical violence. Although state violence might not appear in any form in the picture of so-called voluntary return migration, it is the necessary backdrop against which it operates. David Graeber's (2012) distinction between two different notions of structural violence illustrates this point very well. He juxtaposes a reading of structural violence that understands structures as the outcome of violence and upheld by the threat of violence against the classical notion of structural violence as developed by Johan Galtung (1969). For Galtung, structural violence describes structures that generate violence. With a definition of peace as the absence of violence, with the notion of structural violence Galtung captures situations and arrangements that are characterized by the absence of violence, but cannot be identified as peace, as they continue to generate violent effects. Graeber now suggests adding a second notion of structural violence and uses the term "structures of violence" (Graeber 2012: 113) to distinguish the two. This second notion refers to structures that are created and uphold by the concrete threat – and, if necessary, the application – of (state) violence.

This amendment to the notion of structural violence is crucial for the understanding of the programmes of so-called voluntary return migration. I thus suggest reading border regimes not only as structural violence, but also in the more concrete form of structures of violence. This opens the possibility for a more nuanced reading of border institutions and border practices that do not include the use of direct physical (state) violence, as it allows to explore their

relationship to violence and analyse how they rely on (state) violence as the conditions of the possibility of their existence.

III. Methodology

Studying border regimes through the lens of the thesis of the AOM requires a distinct methodology. It focuses on the conflicts over the right to exercise one's transnational mobility, and it studies how migrants escape border control, ignoring the explicit hegemonic rules of border crossings. In an AOM perspective, the field of study is structured and tied together by the mobile practices and transnational movements of mobile subjects. This chapter lays out how this research constructs its field site, drawing mainly on the idea of multi-sited ethnography, focusing simultaneously on the field and the emerging mobile subject. The second part of this chapter discusses how this research makes use of documents and artifacts to study the border regime and the governance of so-called voluntary return migration. The third part explains the use of different forms of interviews and conversation in the context of this research. It thereby pays particular attention to some ethical issues. This discussion of the ethics of

interviews is of particular importance in the context of clandestine transnational mobility. Finally, this chapter on methods summarises the approach as a whole under the two terms of the extended-case method (Gluckman 1961) and global ethnography (Burawoy 2000).

Constructing the Field: A Multi-sited Ethnography Approach

In his seminal article on the ethnographic study of contemporary world society, George Marcus (1995) advocates for the renewal of the ethnographer's tool kit for fieldwork. He introduces the idea of multi-sited ethnography as a method to study social phenomena that are no longer identifiable at one singular geographical place. It is the attempt to overcome the confinements of traditional ethnographic research, restricted to the observation of a clearly delimited field.[13] According to Marcus, the multi-sited research method is an answer to the contemporary social reality, which is embedded in a network of global interdependencies. He insists that the multi-sited research method does not aim at a comparative study of different sites, rather it aims at the construction of *a multi-sited field* that reflects the reality of contemporary world society more accurately and therefore allows to study social phenomena in its connectedness.

[13] Arguably, it is no coincidence that many seminal ethnographic studies of the early days of our discipline chose an island as field site. The geographic insularity of the island reflects the imagination of a bounded and clearly delimited society that can be studied at one place and without any interference from outside.

Marcus's multi-sited research method suggests six different modes of construction; "follow the people" (Marcus 1995: 106), "follow the thing" (106), "follow the metaphor" (108), "follow the plot, story, or allegory" (109) "follow the life or biography" (109), and "follow the conflict" (110). Some of these modes of constructions overlap and cannot be clearly distinguished. This dissertation uses several of these modes of construction to sketch its field site. Beyond the "follow the people" mode of construction, which is at the centre of this dissertation, the study also includes elements of the "follow the metaphor", the "follow the life or biography", and the "follow the conflict" mode of construction.

According to Marcus, multi-sited ethnography is a possibility to overcome the shortcomings of traditional ethnography that is locally bound and confined to a delimited field. The fragmentation of contemporary society due to processes of globalisation requires a fundamental redefinition of the field in ethnographic research. This account describes contemporary processes of globalisation as new and recent phenomena, and it contrasts them to the past. In other words, the multi-sited ethnography as described by Marcus introduces an epistemic break between a past defined by local structures and processes, and a presence embedded in the global.

Neveling (2010) criticises this underlying epistemological assumption. The separation between a locally bounded past and an interdependent and globally embedded presence neglects the fact that global ties are not a recent

development. There was a globalisation long before the invention of the word to describe this phenomenon. Furthermore, Marcus claims an epistemic break, but does not specify the moment of this qualitative change, nor does he provide any precise criteria that would allow the identification of this change. Although I agree with Neveling's critique of the epistemological assumption of multi-sited ethnography, as a methodological tool kit for the study of processes and phenomena in contemporary world society multi-sited ethnography is still a very useful method to explore border regimes.[14]

Multi-sited ethnography can be used as a method to explore connections between different sites. This idea of the connection allows the reconceptualisation of borders not as a separator of different worlds and entities, but rather as markers of "frictions" (Tsing 2005) and connections. A border regime perspective that emphasises "border as method" (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013) invites the researcher to study the effects of practices of bordering that emerge beyond the geographical border and dispersed in a transnational space of mobility. The methods of a multi-sited ethnography grasp this specific characteristic of the border regime.

[14] However, processes of globalisation do not automatically call for a multi-sited ethnography. In his study on the economic crisis in Mauritius at the beginning of the 21st century, Neveling (2010) convincingly shows how processes of globalisation can be studied at one single place. Global processes and discourses cristalise at precisely identifiable places. The discontinuities, frictions, and inequalities provoked by processes of globalisation emerge at these places and are not necessarily dispersed. Depending on the precise research question, it is thus possible to study these discontinuities at a single place also in the case of border regime.

The following part explains in detail how this dissertation research constructs its field site through the modes of constructions of multi-sited fieldwork. It discusses what multi-sited fieldwork means in the context of the theoretical framework that relies on the analytical proposition of the thesis of the AOM combined with a border regime perspective.

In order to study the effects of the border regime through the analytical lens of the thesis of the AOM in order to explore the contradictions of the liberal nation state in the light of "b/ordering space" (van Houtum et al. 2004), the research adopts a "follow the people" (Marcus 1995) mode of construction of its field site. In doing so, the research focuses on the interdependencies between the different actors involved in the construction of border regimes at different locations. It thus studies institutions, practices, narratives, and people involved in the co-construction of the border regime.

However, a "follow the people" mode of research creates a series of challenges for the fieldwork as it extends the spatial *and* the temporal extension of the field site. Although the research design strongly emphasises a follow-the-people perspective, I was not able to follow individual clandestine Tunisian migrants over a longer period of time. Such an endeavour – as exciting and insightful this would have been – would have collided with the constraints of a research project with a rather fixed schedule and my own limitations in short-term (transnational) mobility. I therefore chose to trace the migration trajectories of my informants mainly through their migration biographies, thus following

Marcus's "follow the biography" mode of construction of a multi-sited ethnography. The reconstruction of the six migration biographies of the main informants is a means to understand how they shape the transnational social space of mobility through their mobile practices. Each of the six migration biographies featured in this dissertation sheds light on one particular aspect of the migration trajectories between Tunisia and Switzerland. In particular, they highlight the frictions within this transnational space of mobility, where clandestine mobile practices of the Tunisian migrants come into conflict with the migration bureaucracy.

Following the thesis of the AOM as an analytical lens, this research thus constructs the transnational space of mobility between Europe and Tunisia through the mobile practices of clandestine Tunisian migrants. This approach to the transnational social space of mobility through individual migration biographies is completed by ethnographic research along the migration trajectories. It consists of three locations; Tunisia as the point of departure, Switzerland as the point of return, and Italy as an important transit country for many clandestine Tunisian migrants. For the study of the programme of so-called voluntary return migration, Italy as a transit country is of minor importance. However, as the migration biographies of my informants have shown, it is an important intermediary step in their transnational trajectory between the two shores of the Mediterranean. For this reason, I decided to include this site as well, although I was able to cover it in my research only in a short field trip to Palermo.

This leads to the construction of the field site from four different perspectives. As its starting point, the research adopts the perspectives of clandestine Tunisian migrants, both in Tunisia before their departure and after their return. It combines it with the perspective of them during their trajectory (in Italy), and when their journey came to an abrupt halt and reached a preliminary dead-end. In a second step, the research confronts the migrants' experiences with the perspective of the migration bureaucracy. Again, it combines both a perspective from Switzerland with a perspective from Tunisia. This eventually leads to a fragmented and kaleidoscopic transnational space of mobility between Tunisia and Switzerland with contradicting and partial views on mobility, departure, and return.

Within this fragmented field site, the ethnographic research focuses on two dimensions. First, it analyses the experience of migrants in their encounter with border institutions. And second, it looks at narratives of departure and return. Both dimensions contribute to answering the question how the migratory subject is produced, shaped, and enacted within this transnational space of mobility along the trajectories of the mobile subjects. Concerning the first dimension, the ethnographic research observes how Switzerland's and Tunisia's border institutions address and govern clandestine Tunisian migrants within the framework of the programmes for so-called assisted voluntary return migration. In other words, it is a study of practices and how they are legitimated. Simultaneously, it analyses the strategies of Tunisian migrants vis a vis these practices of state border institutions. The question is how migrants and actors of

the border regime influence and react on each other. Focusing on this relationship, it allows to explore how strategies and intentions of clandestine migrants change during their migration trajectories between Tunisia and Switzerland.

The second dimension focuses on narratives and the production of the migratory subject. I understand these narratives as the result of a co-construction by border institutions and migrants as well. This allows to examine how the mobile subject is narrated by the different actors. Depending on the precise location in the field, the figure of the migratory subject changes its shape and meaning entirely. At certain moments during the migration trajectory, the migratory subject emerges in the figure of the clandestine migrant and becomes the object of policing and securitisation (see Bigo 1998, 2005; Bigo and Guild 2005). At other moments, the migratory subject emerges in the figure of the asylum seeker and becomes the object of administration and governance. At the same time, through the inclusion into the asylum regime the migratory subject might become either the bearer of legal rights, or the subject of suffering and therefore the target of compassion (see Fassin 2005). As we will discover later in the discussion of the empirical material, a further emerging figure is the migrant as the self-entrepreneurial subject in the governance of so-called assisted voluntary return migration.

As the remarks on multi-sited ethnography and the construction of the field sites have demonstrated, the research design follows a constructivist approach. It

considers the field site as an example to explore the theoretical question of the production of the migratory subject. This eventually allows to explore the contradictions of the liberal nation state in the governance of transnational mobility. Clandestine Tunisian migration and the governance of return thus allow an understanding of the mechanisms that produce and shape the migratory subject.

A constructivist perspective further implies that this research is not an assessment of the programmes for so-called assisted voluntary return. I am not interested in an answer to the question whether these programmes are a "success" or a "failure". During my field research, I was often confronted with exactly this question – especially when I was working with migration bureaucrats. In Switzerland, migration bureaucrats asked me about my experience in Tunisia and how I would assess the success of the return migration programme, while my interlocutors in the migration bureaucracy in Tunisia wanted to know more how the individual projects were prepared in Switzerland, as they wondered why the overwhelming majority of projects was just not feasible.

The Transnational Social Fields Perspective

Adopting a methodological approach of multi-sited ethnography that focuses on the mobility of people and their transnational mobile practices has a strong affinity to the transnational social fields perspective as developed by Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc (1999; see also Glick Schiller 2010). They have coined

the term "transmigrant"; a mobile figure that is characterised by its interconnectedness to more than one nation state, and embedded in more than one society (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc 1999:73). For the purpose of this research, I use their concept less as a theoretical perspective, but rather as a tool that allows me to sketch the relevant field for my fieldwork.

The transnational social field perspective is a response to the critique of the methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003) and attempts to overcome its limitations. In a transnational social field perspective, the nation state is no longer the unquestioned frame of reference for the analysis of social processes and social structures. However, this does not imply that the nation state has become irrelevant for the study of transnational social phenomena such as the mobility of the Tunisian migrants in this research. As Nieswand (2006) convincingly shows, the nation state remains an important actor. As the instance that defines and defends the national borders and defines the rules of entry and exit, it remains a decisive factor in the making of transnational social spaces. In other words, the nation state is a constitutive force for the creation of a transnational social space, in the sense that it is the prerequisite for the formation of any kind of transnational social spaces. Nieswand now argues that the exclusive focus on transnational processes tends to neglect the ongoing importance of the nation state as a structuring force of transnational processes. As the discussion of the migration trajectories of the main informants will show later in this text, the different nation states shape the transnational space of migration and every individual migration trajectory between both shores of the

Mediterranean through migration laws, regulations, and border practices. Therefore, the transnational space of migration is all but disconnected from the nation state and its interventions takes place on different scales in the mobility of people.

While a transnational social field perspective is thus a productive tool for the conceptualization of the field site, the related concept of the transmigrant is more problematic for the main focus of this research. Although the definition of the transmigrant by Glick Schiller et al. (1999) aims at the inclusion of all different sorts of mobile people, it implicitly pictures the high-skilled and relatively wealthy migrant and ignores the figure of the clandestine migrant. In other words, the transmigrant is the migrant recognised by the host state and in possession of a more or less permanent residence right, although she might not enjoy the full legal and social rights as a citizen. The clandestine Tunisian migrants living at the fringes of society and oscillating between a legal residence status and clandestinity is not "embedded in more than one society" (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc 1999:73) that would qualify him as a transmigrant. To the contrary, he his rather disembedded in both societies. The absence of a stable legal status renders his presence in society precarious. At best, it can be described as an inclusion through exclusion. The danger of a negative asylum decision and the subsequent deportation is always lurking around the corner. The Tunisian migrants I am focusing on in this study thus belong precisely not to the category of transmigrants in the sense of Glick Schiller et al. (1999). They are marginalised in both societies in Switzerland and Tunisia alike. As we will

discover later, the lack of social recognition in Tunisian society due to their precarious socio-economic situation is precisely one of the driving forces for their *harraga* venture. And in Switzerland they are denied of any legal residence status and are therefore not only economically and socially excluded, but also with regard to their legal status.

This means that the definition of transmigrants as mobile subjects embedded in more than one society emphasises an aspect that is not compatible with the situation of clandestine Tunisian migrants. As a – partial – solution, I suggest taking the state rather than society as the point of reference for the definition of a transmigrant. This avoids one of the major problems of the definition of the transmigrant in the sense of Glick Schiller et al. (1999). The image of different societies tends to reify the notion of society, as it implies that we can identify distinct and clearly delimited societies, while transmigrants cross these container-like societies. This conceptualization of the transmigrant reintroduces exactly the same image of society through the back door as a methodological nationalism proliferates. This can be avoided when replacing the society with state. Defining the transmigrant as a mobile person that is linked to different states through law, administration, and governance, avoids the reification of society. In this context, I understand the state not as an entity (as such an approach would reify the state itself as well), but as a "bundle of practices and processes in a field of complex power relations", as Bierschenk and de Sardan (2014: 14f) express it.

With this reformulation, it is possible to identify as transmigrants the clandestine Tunisian migrants living at the margins of society, but at the centre of state administration. They are transmigrants in the sense as they do not stand for a unidirectional and one-time migratory movement from a state of origin towards a host state. Rather, they are mobile subjects that crosse state borders back and forth. Similar to the prototypical transmigrant of Glick Schiller et al. (1999), the movements of the clandestine Tunisian migrants describe transnational trajectories that are not based on single and life-changing decisions, but rather on ad-hoc decisions and spontaneous reactions to short-time opportunities, when the next door opens on the path into an uncertain and precarious future.

Looking Through and at Documents

While the previous part describes the construction of the field in a multi-sited ethnography perspective starting from the experience and the transnational trajectories of the clandestine Tunisian migrants, the following part focuses on documents as a means to reconstruct bureaucratic processes and explore how the migration bureaucracy works. Documents as „artifacts of modern knowledge" (Riles 2006) allow to explore the production of meaning. They answer the question how the state sees migration, in order to paraphrase Scott's famous dictum (see Scott 1998). I consider documents in the same constructivist approach as interviews and conversations. In this perspective, documents are the result of social practice. On the one hand, documents allow the reconstruction of certain processes within the state bureaucracy that would not be accessible

otherwise. On the other hand and more important, documents allow to examine how border regimes create meaning of mobility and of border practices. However, documents are not only the medium through which institutionalised discourses become visible. They develop their own life and their own logic. For this reason, the study of the encounters between migrants and actors of the border regimes has to include paperwork as a distinct expression of the migration bureaucracies.

Riles (2006) suggests two different approaches to documents as ethnographic material for research. She distinguishes between a research that looks *at* documents, and a research that looks *through* documents. Looking at documents focuses on the aspect of paperwork and the effects documents produce. In other words, documents are considered as embedded in social practices and part of the social field. In contrast, looking through documents allows to study the production of meanings. In this case, the content becomes more important. Documents contain meaning and they carry knowledge. The difference between these two modes of doing research with documents consists in their perspectives: the first focuses on practices, the second on meaning. For this reason, it is important to refrain from any reduction of documents to their content and to study them only as if they would represent a detail of social reality in an unmediated and transparent way – furthermore, as they are the artifacts of social practices at the same time. In my research, I apply both of Riles's proposed research strategies to examine documents.

Studying the production and circulation of documents and their effects might be done through participant and non-participant observation as well. I will use this approach when studying how the return migration bureaucracy forms the self-responsible and self-entrepreneurial migratory subject. Check lists, written commitments and contracts are important in the return migration bureaucracy and in the administration of the return migration projects of the return migrants. The additional analysis of advertising material for the promotion of so-called voluntary return migration opens a window on the production of meaning and allows to answer the question how the state sees migration.

At this point, it is important to introduce a further remark on the relationship between documents and bureaucracies. As Matthew Hull (2012) argues, documents are not only instruments of bureaucracies, but they are constitutive for them. In other words, documents are a generic feature of the field of (state) bureaucracy. This echoes Max Weber's theory on bureaucracy. Weber considers the written document as the most important artifact for the organisation of modern bureaucracies (Weber 1922:655-678). In his account, documents organise bureaucratic knowledge. Furthermore, documents even organise and structure entire bureaucracies. For Weber, documents do not only contain and carry discourses and meanings, and store and represent knowledge about the social reality bureaucracy governs, but they have concrete effects in the organisation of bureaucracies and beyond. Studying this aspect of documents requires an analysis of how bureaucrats produce and make use of documents. Chapter 6 will explore this aspect of bureaucracy and documents through the

analysis of flowcharts that represent and imagine the governance of asylum seekers in Switzerland. The knowledge visualised in these flowcharts is at the same time the description and representation of bureaucratic practices, and it is prescriptive for bureaucratic practices. Simultaneously, as an idealised representation of the governance of asylum seekers, it shows how bureaucracy conceptualises migration and the management of migration.

This description of documents might suggest the conceptualisation of documents in a perspective of the actor-network theory (see Latour 2005): the document as an actant causes effects, similar to any bureaucrat who causes effects with her decisions. The problem with this flat ontology is that the idea of social practices as intended and meaningful actions of (human) subjects disappears. For the purpose of this research, it is more productive to stick to this distinction and insist on the idea of social practices. Documents might indeed cause effects, but this causation is of a radically different quality than effects caused by consciously acting social actors. The effects of documents cannot be studied in isolation but only as embedded in a particular social field.

As I noticed during my fieldwork with return migrants who are about to realise a return migration project in the context of the programme for assisted voluntary return migration, documents are important in the interaction between migrants and bureaucrats. In order to get one's project funded, a whole range of documents is required; tenancy agreements, professional licenses, or tax documents should underline the feasibility of the project. While bureaucrats

consider it as essential and indispensable in order to guarantee a proper and fair procedure that prevents possible frauds, migrants often complain about these – in their perspective pointless – requirements of written documents; in particular as the obtaining of a certain official document from the Tunisian administration often does not depend from the compliance with certain criteria, but rather from personal relationships with bureaucrats in the local administration, or the use of bribe money to speed up administrative processes and unlock certain documents and certificates.

Let us now turn to the second aspect of Riles's methodology of the study of documents; looking *through* documents. Considered as artifacts of knowledge, documents carry knowledge and meaning. As such they allow us to study how bureaucracies create meaning and how they imagine the world. In the context of this research, it means to explore how the state sees the transnational mobility of the Tunisian migrants. The second part of this dissertation draws mainly on data obtained through this method. The focus on the production of meaning should not be confused with discourses. I understand the production of meaning as a social practice that refers to a social field. Within this field, the production of meaning is contested and permanently reshaped by the different actors. But in a similar vein as I described above, the conceptual perspective is directed towards the social field, and not towards discourses.

Interviews and Conversations

Beyond observation in a multi-sited ethnography perspective and the study of documents, different forms of interviews and conversations build the third methodological pillar of this dissertation. In addition to the methodological aspect of interviews and conversation, I will also discuss the ethical implications of interviews. In this particular field, migrants experience interviews often as a powerful and violent tool of the migration bureaucracy that transforms personal experience of mobility into knowledge of domination. For this reason, it is crucial to discuss thoroughly the implication of using migration biographies as data and explain the research ethics at stake.

During fieldwork, I used all sorts of interviews and conversations: from formal interviews to informal conversations and biographical interviews. Interviews and conversations with clandestine Tunisian migrants allow me the reconstruction of the transnational migration trajectories. Simultaneously, it is a means to explore how the informants experience these trajectories. It allows to get an idea how clandestine Tunisian migrants make sense of their decisions during their trajectories between Tunisia and Switzerland. On the other side, the interviews with migration bureaucrats allow to understand motives, intentions, and self-legitimation strategies of the border bureaucracy. In addition, interviews are a tool to gain – at least to a limited extent – insights into processes within the return migration bureaucracy that are not accessible through participant observation. As the accessibility to return migration bureaucracy was limited,

interviews with bureaucrats became an important method to understand the mechanisms and structures of the return migration bureaucracy.

Silverman (2006:119) identifies three versions of interview data; a positivist, an emotionalist, and a constructivist version. In practice, these three different accounts of interview data are never separated in such a sharp way. While the positivist version of interview data is certainly opposed to the emotionalist and the constructivist version, especially the second and third version overlap. A positivist perspective considers interviews as a means that gives immediate access to "facts about the world" (Silverman 2006:119). In this perspective, the data obtained is independent from the research setting, from the interviewer and the interviewee, as well as they are independent from the specific relationship between the two interlocutors who engage in the conversation (Silverman 2006:121). In contrast, a constructivist approach understands the interview itself as part of the world it describes (Silverman 2006:129). This is how most of the anthropologists would describe interview data – and so do I. Interviews are thus the product of a co-construction between interviewer and interviewee.

However, there are different degrees of constructivism. Its most radical version defends a position that the data of the conversation is restricted to the conversation itself and does not connect to a conversation's topic somewhere in the social world. In other words, the content of the interview never gives an account of the social world beyond the interview. This radical version of constructivism either introduces a questionable dichotomy between data gained

from interviews that are strictly constructed, and other data from written documents that are considered as objective and referring to a world out there. Or this radical version tends to lose itself in an all-embracing constructivism, leading eventually to a dead end where no proposition on social reality is possible anymore, because this social reality simply is not accessible in any ways. A more moderate position retains the possibility of a connection between the conversation itself and a subject out there to which the conversation itself refers to.[15] I tend towards this later position of constructivism. Although the conversation and interviews are indeed the result of a co-construction between researcher and informant, they do tell a lot of things about social reality beyond the interview context. In order to move methodologically from a subjective position into the direction of a more objective one, one can compare different interviews and conversations on the same subject that allows *the triangulation of data* in order to achieve a more complete picture of social reality.[16] In other words, such a comparison creates a certain intersubjectivity that allows to gain more reliable data from interviews.

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[15] For a discussion of this issue on a more fundamental level and not restricted only to interviews, see also Meyer and Schareika (2009). Although their argument is based on a series of rather problematic dichotomies (e.g. the dualism between reality and representation, and the dichotomy between a theory of action and idealism), they highlight an important issue on the epistemological status of ethnographic data. I do not enter into this far-reaching methodological discussion. Therefore, in this context I focus on the aspect of interviews and conversation.

[16] I thus choose a pragmatic approach that focuses on the methodological issues. I acknowledge that this solution does not address the more fundamental epistemological issues that are not addressed here.

The problem of subjective versus objective data emerges again in the context of the biographical interviews.[17] They occupy a particular place in this research. Following the analytical proposition of the thesis of the AOM, biographical interviews are prominently featured in chapter 5 as a methodological starting point to explore the migration regime in general and the return migration bureaucracy in specific. From a pragmatic standpoint and with the limitations of the field in mind, biographical interviews with clandestine Tunisian migrants balance the shortcomings of the practical restrictions that prevented me of following the informants during their migration trajectories over a longer period of time. Therefore, the biographical interview is an attempt to widen the perspective from a detailed observation of particular situations to the larger narrative of migration biographies. These interviews focus in particular on the migration trajectories of the informants. They allow the fragmented and partial reconstruction of the complicated migration trajectories between Tunisia and Switzerland. Typically, these interviews consisted of one longer and mainly unstructured conversation that focused on the migration trajectories, and additional shorter and more focused interviews to clarify some aspects that remained ambiguous or vague in the initial conversation.[18] Due to a general reluctance of many of the interview partners, most of the interviews were not

[17] In their book, Merill and West (2009) provide a detailed discussion of biographical interviews, and, more general, of the biographical method. It gives also a compact overview of the history of biographical methods in social sciences.

[18] I discuss the methodological challenges of doing interviews in the particular field of asylum seekers in more detail in the introduction to the chapter that presents the six individual migration biographies.

tape recorded. Instead, I took notes during the conversation and completed this information with memos I wrote down right after the proper conversation. These interviews allowed me to reconstruct the individual migration trajectories. In the context of this dissertation, these biographical interviews provide the subjective narratives about mobile practices. On the one hand, they bear witness of the personal experiences and how border regimes affect individual mobile practices. On the other hand, these interviews inform about individual expectations, intentions, and migratory projects.

Biographical interviews always follow the logics of an ex post construction of meaning and legitimation. This *"illusion biographique"* (Bourdieu 1985) creates a particular narrative, which has the tendency to eliminate contradictions, frictions, and ruptures. Dealing with biographical interviews therefore requires taking into account that they are narratives that legitimate and explain the actual situation of the interviewed person. They are less a testimony of how the past was, but rather serve as a legitimation of the present through the past. What does this mean with regard to the biographical interview featured in this research? First, the experiences of mobility these interviews document are necessarily subjective. Second, nonetheless, as one can identify topics and patterns that emerge repeatedly across the different conversations, they allow to identify in a transversal reading a range of issues that are constitutive for the migratory experience of these clandestine Tunisian migrants. I consider these experiences as a decisive aspect of the construction of the migratory subject. Such a transversal reading allows the development of an intersubjective perspective.

Third, this comparison shows that individual experiences are not only individual. Often, they are inscribed in a larger picture of transnational mobility.

Biographical interviews also allow to explore meanings, and not only experiences. In narrating the individual migration trajectories, the informants create meaning and make sense of their experiences. This is precisely the ex-post creation of meaning in the above-described sense of Bourdieu. Through this narration, the informants fabricate and shape their own migratory self; a subject that is conceived differently to the one border regimes create and impose on them. This creation of meaning and justification occurs not only in the interview situation with me. I observed it in discussions among migrants themselves as well. This ex-post creation of the migratory self is of particular importance in the context of return migration. As the discussion of the data will show in more detail later, assisted return is a delicate issue. Often, the social environment interprets it as a defeat. Many return migrants consider it as very important that returning home is not interpreted as a defeat, but as a conscious decision. As such, it should appear as the logical consequence of their past migration trajectory. Therefore, in general migration trajectories are presented as success stories.

While interviews and conversations with migrants took place in informal settings for most of the time and revolved around personal experience, interviews and conversations with migration bureaucrats were much more formal and impersonal in general. While migrants represented themselves, migration bureaucrats aimed at representing their institution or their position. They would

rarely consider their statements as expressions of their individual standpoint. When personal statements occasionally happened in conversations, they were in general flagged explicitly as such in order to strictly distinguish between the office and the person. However, I frequently made the experience that the most interesting statements were not voiced during the formal interview, but rather afterwards when I turned off my recording device. For example, I do remember a conversation with a senior staff member of Tunis's IOM office. We had an appointment with his superior who was still busy with phone calls in her office. For this reason, we were hanging out in the staircase waiting for the door to open and chatted about different things, most of them unrelated to the return migration programme. As our conversation unfolded and meandered between his employment biography and experiences of living abroad over a long period, he suddenly began to talk about his work and compared the actual working conditions in non-governmental organisations with his experience from former times when he just started working as a junior staff member in the NGO world. He deplored that the idealistic engagement characterising the NGO world of former times disappeared over the years. "Now, the managers are taking over" he told me indulged in nostalgic memories of his former engagement. He criticised the younger generation of NGO staff members as only career-oriented and not devoted to the content of the work, which consists in "helping people" as he expressed it. He would never have made such comments in formal interviews. Such statements would collide fundamentally with the position he occupies in the organisation.

The Extended Case Method

As a whole, the research follows the idea of the extended case method ECM, as first developed by Gluckman (1961) and later refined and reformulated by Burawoy (2000a, 200b) for the ethnographic study of global phenomena. While Gluckman focuses on the empirical study of single conflicts in particular to extract general principles from these detailed and specific observations, Burawoy has a broader scope with the ambition to develop an ethnography that is at the same time local *and* global. This part of the chapter thus comes back to the initial question that asks how ethnography as the detailed study of local contexts contributes to the understanding of global formations, such as transnational border regimes. It proposes an answer that is quite similar to the one suggested by multi-sited ethnography, yet it develops its answer from a different epistemological position. In contrast to multi-sited ethnography, the extended case method and global ethnography emphasise the question of power relations. ECM raises the question how small-scale – and therefore ethnographically observable – contexts are connected to large-scale formation of power and inequalities.

Michael Burawoy (2000a:1) asks how ethnography can be global. He raises this question as he is worried whether the ethnographic method can reclaim its relevance in global world society with its specific questions. Until today, the ethnographic method carries the burden from its founding days, when the method was developed with the imagination to study locally bounded and

ahistorical societies, although there is indeed a long record of attempts to add the dimensions of history and of connectedness to the "traditional" methods of ethnographic research. However, Burawoy turns back to the crucial question what a method confined to the detailed study of small and local contexts is able to contribute to the understanding of global formations. Beyond the methodological issue, it contains the question how the local is connected to the global, and how the global emerges in the local.[19] I consider border regimes as such an example of the entanglements of the global and the local. In addition, the idea of the border regime, understood as the principle that connects and disconnects different local contexts, raises not only the question how the local is connected to the global, but also how different locales are connected to each other.

With the extended case method ECM, Burawoy builds on the work of Max Gluckman, one of the main figures of the Manchester school. Gluckman applied the ECM in particular in the context of different forms of legal conflicts in different societies in Southern Africa. The extended case method starts with the observation of small social occurrences. It closely observes the interactions between the different actors involved. In these interactions, thus far the thesis of the ECM, social practices and conflicts become visible and thus observable. The

[19] In this context, Tsing (2005) critisises that social theory in general has too readily accepted the claim that globalisation entails a process of homogenisation. The dichotomy between the global with its tendency of homogenisation and the local which is synonym to heterogeneity is not very helpful. With the term friction, Tsing captures the heterogenous elements that converge and come into contact with each other in a process that is commonly referred to as globalisation.

comments and explanations of the actors involved provide further information about the genealogy of these social interactions and conflicts. The aim of the extended case method is to connect these small-scale occurrences to an explanation of more general social formations.

Burawoy (1991; 1998; 2000) uses the interdependencies between the micro-perspective and the macro-level as a starting point to develop his own approach to global ethnography. The method of global ethnography aims at locating everyday life in its extra-local and historical context (see Burawoy 1998). The subsequent question is how it is possible to extract the general from the unique. The ECM offers two alternative starting points from where a global ethnography is simultaneously developed: theory and empiric data. The ECM relies on a strong theoretical framework that provides the tools for the description of the connection between the local and the global. Simultaneously, ECM starts from the ethnographic data extracted from the field (Burawoy 1998:7). With this double starting point, ECM differs itself from the more positivist methods such as the grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967; cf. Charmaz 2000), although it also emphasises the role and importance of ethnographic data as a means to construct theory. Grounded theory refrains from any theoretical assumption; at least in its ideal – and idealised – version and claims to build theory only from the empirical data. In contrast, the ECM starts its empirical enquiry with a position informed by theory, and simultaneously with a theoretical position

imbued by empirical data. The ECM therefore brings theory and empirical data into a dialog. They co-constitute and influence each other simultaneously.[20]

As Burawoy (1998:10-13) notes, the ECM does not inscribe itself in the tradition of positive science and thus positions itself as an alternative to a positivist grounded theory. He is well aware of the researcher's role in the field. As an active participant and without the option to withdraw herself to an idealised position of the mere observer, the researcher is part of the field and interacts with it. As such, the ECM inscribes itself in the tradition of reflexive science.[21] As "a legitimating principle to situated practice" (Burawoy 1998:16), reflexivity frames ethnographic practice in the context of the ECM. Unlike a positivist approach such as grounded theory, it does not seek to minimise distortion caused by the observer through her proximity to the field. Rather, it embraces these distortions, as social order is revealed precisely in situations when this order is questioned.[22] A reflexive approach acknowledges that theory constitutes "situated knowledge" (Haraway 1988) and co-structures social processes. At the same time, ECM is reflexive in the sense as it resists a simple

[20] For a detailed comparison between grounded theory and the extended case method, see also Tavaroy and Timmermans (2009).

[21] For a comparison between the tradition of positive science and a reflexive approach, see also Bohnsack (2003).

[22] For a detailed discussion of reflexive social sciences, see especially the work of Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992).

"applicationism" (Walters 2012: 5) of theory, which would reduce the empirical material to an illustrative appendix.

Burawoy (1998: 20) identifies four modes of extensions that characterize the ECM and that allow to reach "the global" from "the local". In each mode of extension, the aim is to go beyond the small-scale observation of social occurrences. This does not work with a strict positivist understanding of social theory and without any theoretical framework that provides a model how the local and the global are connected.

Among these four modes of extension, I consider structuration as the most important mode of extension for my own research. Structuration means to locate social processes in the context of their external determination (Burawoy 1998: 23). In the context of return migration and the production of the migratory subject, this signifies to locate the individual migration trajectories in the wider context of border regimes and their global "pratiques de zonage", as Achille Mbembe (2013: 7) calls it with reference to racism. With this term, Mbembe describes the partition and fragmentation of the world into different zones. Although he develops his argument with respect to the postcolonial condition, it also describes exactly the work of border regimes. The aim of this dissertation research is to examine these *pratiques de zonage* with regard to border regimes and to study how questions of domination and subversion of border regimes are inscribed in everyday encounters between migrants and the migration bureaucracy.

Let me conclude this methodological chapter with one final remark. In an ECM perspective, what could constitute "a case" with regard to the research on so-called voluntary return migration? Concerning the ECM, building a case starts with the theoretical narrative that provides a general framework (Tavaroy and Timmermans 2009:251). The construction of cases and their extensions are theory-dependent. This is the main difference to grounded theory that claims to construct the case only from empirical data and without any preceding theory. ECM claims that without a preceding theory, it is impossible to describe the boundaries of a case. With respect to the dissertation research on so-called voluntary return migration of Tunisian migrants, this means that I approach the issue of return migration and the production of the mobile subject from the theoretical standpoint offered by the concept of border regimes and in combination with the idea of clandestine migration as a form of appropriation of mobility. I interpret the individual migration trajectories within this theoretical field that opens a perspective on global formations of inequalities and the governance of differentiated mobility. In other words, my reading attempts to link the migration biographies of the clandestine Tunisian migrants on the one hand and the ethnographic material of the return migration bureaucracy on the other hand with a more generalised perspective on the governance of global inequalities through migration regimes.

IV. Tracing the Transnational Space of Mobility Between Tunisia and Europe

Chapter Four discusses some key aspects of Tunisia's migration history that have shaped the transnational space of mobility between both shores of the Mediterranean; the space of mobility which is today the scene for clandestine migration of Tunisians, of departure and return. Starting point is the premise that the contemporary patterns of transnational mobility of Tunisian migrants is embedded in a long history of departure and return that shaped Tunisian society. With a strong emphasis on the Tunisian history of migration under colonial rule, the chapter argues that throughout long periods of its history, Tunisian society was rather shaped by immigration than emigration. Tunisian labour migration that started to become an important phenomenon since the country's independence in 1956 and the contemporary phenomenon of clandestine migration did not start in an empty space, but are connected to

preceding forms of mobility. The aim of this chapter is thus to examine the emergence of the transnational space of migration between Tunisia and the Northern shores of the Mediterranean in a historical perspective. This perspective is completed in the second part with the discussion of the internal urban-rural migration; a process that has started under the colonial rule of France and that has continued ever since.

Migration and the Colonial Encounter

For a very long time Tunisia was by and large a country of immigration, rather than a country of emigration. It has become a country of emigration only for the last sixty years. Over centuries, the arrival of immigrants was the dominant experience of the population living on the territory of contemporary Tunisia. The consecutive arriving of Arab and Sephardic refugees from Spain in the 15th century, the French and Italian settlers mainly since the 19th century, or the Ottoman rulers between the 16th and the 18th century are constitutive for the social structure and the collective memory of Tunisian society. Generally speaking, the characteristics of Tunisia as a country of immigration does not change until the end of the French protectorate in 1956 (Ressaissi 1984:174ff).

With respect to the emergence of a trans-Mediterranean social space of migration between Tunisia and Europe, there are especially two important periods. The first period is the immigration of Sephardic Jews and Arabs after the Spanish Alhambra Decree in the 15th century. Although it dates back more than five

centuries, it marks the beginning of dense transnational networks of Tunisian society that continue to have their effects until today. The second period with far reaching and more immediate consequences concerning the shaping of a transnational space of Tunisian mobility is the colonial period in the late 19th and first half of 20th century. The arrival of mainly French settlers transformed not only Tunisian society itself, but established strong transnational interdependencies between France and Tunisia that have outlasted the end of the French protectorate. This broad overview already shows that migration to and from Tunisia is not at all a recent phenomenon. Let me discuss these periods in more detail.

After the fall of Granada in 1492 which marked the end of the Arab rule over the Spanish peninsula, the Alhambra Decree led to a massive forced emigration of Sephardic Jews and Arabs alike. Many of them settled in North Africa. In Tunisia, the newly arrived Sephardic Jews (the so-called *Grana*) met an indigenous Jewish population (the so-called *Twensa*), present on the territory for centuries and with a major presence on the island of Djerba in Southern Tunisia (Perkins 2013:25). In contrast to the Arab population of Spanish origin, the Sephardic Jews maintained a dense network between both shores of the Mediterranean throughout the following centuries. In particular, the Italian harbour town of Livorno became an important hub for this trans-Mediterranean network. Due to its liberal legislation towards Jews over a certain period, many Sephardic Jews settled in Livorno after the expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula first (see also Trivellato 2009). Only centuries later, an important part of this

population moved further on to Tunisia (Perkins 2013:25). In contrast to the *Twensas* living in both rural and urban areas and who were generally poor, the *Granas* maintained important commercial networks across the Mediterranean as merchants. Although it was a remarkably small population – based on the statistics provided by Taïeb (1982), Perkins (2013:25) estimates the overall number of *Granas* to only one or two thousand at that time –, they played an important role in Tunisian society and some of them successfully joined the Tunisian elites as advisors of the court or business representatives due to their economic influence as merchants (see Perkins 2013: 25). The transnational network they maintained between both shores of the Mediterranean – mainly based on kinship relations – was important for the commercial activities.

As a cosmopolitan elite that connected both shores of the Mediterranean through trade, the *Granas* became the ideal intermediaries for the colonial power to negotiate with the local ruling class in Tunisia in the late 19th century. The colonial rule of France over the Tunisian territory marked the beginning of an intensification of immigration to Tunisia with effects that transformed Tunisian society in an unprecedented way. However, in 1881 when the French protectorate was formally established and which marked the legal beginning of French ruling over Tunisia, there was already a considerable presence of foreigners of European origin.[23] The arrival of businessmen and speculators since

[23] On the history of French presence in Tunisia before the protectorate in the 19th century, see also Planel (2015).

1857 increased the presence of Europeans of different origin in Tunisia (Perkins 2013: 25). At that time, Tunisia was already home to an important and constantly growing community of Italians, most of them belonging to the working-class population and living mainly in Tunis's suburb La Goulette, and in the capital itself. In 1883, the census records a foreign population of already twenty thousand people, from which only five percent were of French origin (Perkins 2013: 48f). In other words, before the formal beginning of the French colonisation of Tunisia, the French formed a small minority among the foreign population in Tunisia, while the majority of Tunisia's foreign population was of Italian origin. In addition to the Italians, a high share of the Tunisian working class population was formed by Maltese (Sebag 1998:330).

Most of these immigrants settled in the wider area of the capital; either in specifically designated districts of the medina, in the growing residential areas adjacent to the old part of the town, or in Tunis's suburbs. Only few found their new home in the hinterland or the South. The colonisation of the rural hinterland started only years later and was massively promoted and facilitated by the French administration, though with limited success.

With the beginning of the French protectorate, immigration of French citizens was actively promoted and led to a constant influx of French settlers; the so-called *colons*. However, it took further decades until the French population outnumbered the Italians among the foreign Tunisian population. Only as late

as in the 1930s, the French became the largest foreign population in Tunisia, according to Ressaissi (1984:83).

The immigration politics of the colonial power was one aspect leading to this change in the composition of the non-Tunisian population on the territory of the protectorate. The other decisive factor was the naturalisation politics of the colonial administration. In order to change the initial imbalance between French and Italian citizens in the protectorate, the administration facilitated and promoted the naturalisation of Italians (Bruno 2010: 61; Goussaud-Falgas 2013: 285-334).[24] This naturalisation politics contributed to the increase of the number of French citizens.

In socioeconomic terms, the French population did not replace the Italian, as French and Italians occupied different socio-economic positions in Tunisian society under colonial rule. Unlike the Italians, most of the French were not part of the urban working class, as Ressaissi (1984:87) highlights. They formed the colonial urban bourgeoisie and occupied the higher ranks in the colonial administration, while a minority of the French lived as so-called *colons* (settlers) in the countryside. This rural French population of *colons* was divided between large-scale landowners and small-scale family-based farmers. However, the colonisation of the rural area took place at slow speed and was never of main

[24] In 1956, when the French protectorate came to its end, according to estimations of that time by the Italian consulate 60'000 French citizens were of Italian origin in Tunisia (Goussad-Falgas 2013: 334).

interest for the colonial power. Therefore, the larger area of Tunis remained the place of residence for the majority of the European communities in the country (Ressaissi 1984:86; Goussaud-Falgas 2013:133-153). In 1904, as much as 55'000 foreigners (compared to 80'000 Muslims and 39'000 Jews of Tunisian origin) lived in Tunis and its suburbs (Perkins 2013:58).

The continuing influx of mainly French settlers was interrupted during both World Wars only. At the end of the French protectorate, there was a foreign population of around 250'000 persons, with French and Italians composing the overwhelming majority. 85% of this population lived in urban areas (Ressaissi 1984:86).

The European residents in Tunisia never formed a homogeneous interest group, as Lewis (2011: 40f) emphasises. In particular with respect to socio-economic factors, the European residents in Tunisia were a highly heterogeneous group, as the previous discussion showed. There was always a clear distinction between the French-dominated colonial bourgeoisie and an Italian- and Maltese- dominated labour class; both with different interests, and therefore also with different alliances (Clancy-Smith 2011). In other words, the racial segregation between Tunisians and Europeans in the colonial logic was completed by a class division of the European population itself.

With Tunisian independence in 1956, the number of Europeans on Tunisian territory dropped dramatically within a short period of time. The majority of

French settlers left Tunisia immediately in the years following independence. The so-called *crise de Bizerte* – a short and violent military conflict in 1961 between Tunisia and France over the French naval base of Bizerte, which was the last French holding in the former protectorate – increased tensions between French settlers and Tunisians and subsequently accelerated the departure of the remaining French population.

From Immigration to Emigration: A Paradigm Shift

As the previous remarks have shown, Tunisian labour migration did not start in an empty space in the second half of the 20th century. There was already a transnational space of mobility with a long history, marked by manifold networks and ties between both shores of the Mediterranean. The following part describes the emergence of labour migration between Tunisia and several European countries and concludes with a discussion of the *harraga* as a new type of high-risk clandestine migration emerging in the 1990ies. It compares the case of France as the country with the closest links to Tunisia due to the colonial past with Germany as an example of a country with an institutionalised labour migration agreement. The third case is Switzerland as a country without particular historical (due to the colonial past) nor institutional (due to a bilateral labour migration agreement) ties with Tunisia.

Tunisian Labour Migration to France After Independence

The end of the French protectorate in 1956 and the foundation of the independent Tunisian republic marked a fundamental change in trans-Mediterranean migration patterns to and from Tunisia. It was the beginning of a double migration flow towards mainland France of French settlers "reurning home" and Tunisian labourers in search of jobs and an income. Between 1946 and 1966, the foreign population in Tunisia dropped from 10 percent of the total population to only 1 percent (Bruno 2010:10). In 1966, the remaining foreign population counted no more than 16'000 French citizens, 10'500 Italians and less than 6'000 other Europeans (Bruno 2010:10). Roughly two-third of the European population left Tunisia between 1955 and 1959, mainly in the direction of their respective home country France and Italy (Perkins 2013:147). This means that within very few years, the composition of Tunisian society changed dramatically.

Simultaneously, Tunisian labour migration to mainland France started to grow. In contrast to Algerian labour migration to France, an insignificant number of Tunisians were already living in France in 1955 (Simon 1974:186; Bruno 2010:55). The reason for this difference can be explained with the different political integration of Tunisia and Algeria into the French colonial state. While French Algeria got the status of a department and therefore became an integral part of the French administration, Tunisia with its status as a *protectorat*

(protectorate) was never fully integrated into the French political system in the same way.[25]

The first Tunisian labour migrants arriving at the Northern shores of the Mediterranean were Tunisian Jews (Simon 1974: 187). Their departure from Tunisia is directly linked to the withdrawal of France as the protecting power of the Jewish minority in Tunisia. Many Jewish Tunisians maintained close links with the colonial administration, sometimes they even occupied administrative positions within the colonial administration. With the independence, they found themselves exposed to anti-Semitic attacks by parts of the population who blamed them for their collusion with the former colonial power. The Tunisian state was not capable – nor particularly willing – to protect them from these harassments. As Simon (1974) shows, in addition to this heated anti-colonial and anti-Semitic atmosphere that pushed many Jewish Tunisians towards an emigration to mainland France, economic reasons were the other driving force for this first phase of labour migration. This changed within a few years and soon other Tunisians moved temporarily or permanently northwards as labour migrants.

In her study on Tunisian labour migration, Anne-Sophie Bruno (2010) traces the individual migration trajectories of Tunisian labour migrants and describes

[25] French Algeria was divided into the three departments Alger, Oran, and Constantine under a civilian government. This made it an integral part of France and distinguished it in administrative terms from a colony (see also Naylor 2000).

the changing migration policies that shaped the possibilities and restrictions of Tunisian labour migrants towards and within France. Her work shows how a very liberal and only loosely regulated labour migration regime for Tunisian citizens became more restrictive over the years, closing down more and more loopholes that characterised the first liberal phase of French migration policies towards Tunisians.

In a first period of Tunisian labour migration towards France between 1955 and 1958, Tunisian citizens did not require any visa or labour permit for entering France. A simple passport was sufficient (Bruno 2010:54f). In addition, there were no restrictions concerning the exercise of a professional activity. Long-term residence permits were granted upon entry and without any further constraints. In comparison to other (European) states, the French migration regime for the governance of the transnational mobility of Tunisian citizens was extremely lax; it was – in other words – characterized by the absence of any forms of restrictions.

This liberal approach to the governance of transnational migration changed only with regard to minor details in the following years, as Bruno (2010) shows. Although a visa obligation was introduced in 1958 for Tunisian citizens, this first step in restricting and regulating migration did not impose a serious restriction for Tunisians in the everyday. They continued to move between the two countries more or less freely as the now required visa was granted without any problem. However, this liberal migration regime for Tunisian migrants was rather an exception than the rule for France's migration policy, and over the

years the French administration brought the Tunisian exception in line with the general migration policy of France with regard to the regulation of labour migration. Since the early 1960s, a series of measures aimed at a stricter control of the until that time virtually unregulated Tunisian labour migration towards mainland France. The first move was the conclusion of a French-Tunisian convention aimed at the stricter control of the unregulated labour migration, yet this bilateral agreement remained dead letter. Another attempt was the establishment of French recruiting agencies in Tunisia. This project was suddenly stopped in the course of a series of diplomatic disputes in 1963, when Tunisia nationalised agricultural properties of French *colons*. However, this suspension of the attempt of a more regulated and controlled labour migration between Tunisia and France did not signify that labour migration as such came to a halt. Rather, it continued on an ad-hoc basis, and was not orchestrated by state authorities.[26]

As a general rule, setting up legal regulations with respect to Tunisian labour migration had little effect on everyday practices of labour migration at that time. As long as France de facto pursued its liberal regulation practice for labour migrants who did not comply with the migration laws, there was no substantial effect on the lives of Tunisian labour migration, as Bruno (2010) shows. In theory, the *Office national d'immigration* (ONI) was the sole responsible instance

[26] On a detailed account of labour migration and administrative regulations in the 1960ies, see in particular the historical study of Bruno (2010:66-73).

for the administration of labour migration to France. In reality, most of the labour migrants entered France with a tourist visa and applied for a regularisation of their residence and work permit only afterwards. Informal networks of acquaintances and relatives played an important role in the recruitment of Tunisian labour force for the French labour market. They established and maintained links between their region of origin and the places where they lived and worked. Bruno (2010) based her observation on historical records of the French Ministry of Labour. This connects very well to the case of Abdellah I introduced in the introductory vignette. The examination of his migration biography in the following chapter will reveal further parallels and details.

The technically illegal entry to France by Tunisian labour migrants with a tourist visa was not only the result of a creative and subversive transnational mobile practice, but an effect of an inconsistent border regime too. With the suspension of the bilateral agreement on labour migration in 1963, the ONI offices closed their doors in Tunisia. This signified that there was no instance that had the competence to issue work permits and visa for labour migrants. For this reason, Tunisians labour migrants simply had no other option than immigrating to France with an ordinary tourist visa, applying only afterwards for its conversion into a work visa once reached mainland France. Not surprisingly, a study concluded that 99 percent of the Tunisian labour migrants' work and residence permits were regularised only afterwards in the end of the 1960ies (see Tapinos 1975). As I will discuss later in the reconstruction and analysis of the six exemplary migration biographies, the lax regularisation practice regardless of the

previous migration status was exactly the common experience of many Tunisian labour migrants in the 1960ies.

In summary, the historically close relationship between Tunisia and France due to the colonial legacy, a liberal labour migration policy, and the high demand of unskilled labour force by the French economy led to a quickly growing population of Tunisian citizens in France in the 1960ies. Among this population, a considerable high number of them origin from the Southern *gouvernorats*, especially Médenine (Seklani 1974, see also Taamallah 1976).[27]

The liberal practice of France's labour migration policy and the flexible regularisation practices ended in the 1970s with a paradigm shift. Stricter rules for immigration, the introduction of residence permits that depend on work permits, and restricted possibilities for the regularisation of residency resulted not only in a more difficult access to France and the French labour market, but this paradigm shift also produced the first so-called *sans-papiers* (Bruno 2010:75). Although these *sans-papiers* – strictly speaking migrants without a valid residence permit – technically existed already before, it was a social figure that emerged only through this shift in migration policy that produced migrants at the margins of the state without any prospective of a regularisation of their residence status. Especially for these *sans-papiers*, informal transnational family

[27] For a case study of the transnational labour migration between Tunisia and France, see also Ma Mung's (1986) article on the city of M'saken in Central Tunisia.

networks became extremely important, as a study of Dumont (2011) on Tunisian *sans-papiers* in the region of Nantes shows.

Today, 250'000 Tunisian migrants are living in France, according to the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE), forming one of the major minorities of foreign nationals in France[28]

Tunisian Labour Migration Beyond France: The Examples of Germany and Switzerland

With the end of the liberal migration regime of France for Tunisian citizens, the migration patterns multiplied, and other destination became important for Tunisian labour migrants as well; especially the neighbouring country Libya (with its emerging oil industry) and Italy as another country with a long-shared history became important destinations. In particular Italy kept a liberal migration policy for Tunisian migrants for a much longer period of time than France. This resulted in today's second largest community of Tunisians abroad after France. According to the latest available statistics of the *Office des tunisiens à l'étranger* OTE, the community of Tunisians in Italy counts 189'092 people.[29]

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[28] http://www.insee.fr/fr/ffc/docs_ffc/FPORSOC15j_FTLo2pop.pdf; last accessed 28.11.2015. The Tunisian *Office des tunisiens à l'étranger* (OTE) counts 668'668 Tunisians in France (cf. http://www.ote.nat.tn/fileadmin/user_upload/doc/Repartition_de_la_communaute_tunisienne_a_l_etranger__2012.pdf; last accessed 27.11.2015). The different counting of persons with a double nationality explain this huge gap. While France counted them as French (therefore they do not emerge in the statistics as Tunisians), Tunisia counts them as fellow citizens.

[29] www.ote.nat.tn/fileadmin/user_upload/doc/Repartition_de_la_communaute_tunisienne_a_l_etranger__2012.pdf; last accessed 04.12.2015

Libya as the neighbouring country in North Africa attracted a lot of Tunisian labour force for decades. Not only was its oil-based national economy in constant demand of labour force, the close familial ties between Tunisians and Libyans in some regions of the South – especially in the Médenine *gouvernorat* that borders Libya directly – was another facilitator for Tunisian migration to Libya. According to the latest available statistical data from 2012, after France, Italy, and Germany, the largest Tunisian community resides in Libya with 68'952 persons.[30]

The following parts briefly present the case of Germany and Switzerland as two countries with contrasting histories of (labour) migration relations with Tunisia. Germany serves as an exemplary case of a country with a bilateral labour agreement, while Switzerland is a contrasting case that shows how a transnational community of Tunisians have emerged over the years without any notable pre-existing historical ties due to the colonial past, nor an institutionalised bilateral labour agreement.

Besides France and Italy – both countries with a long shared history with Tunisia and mainly based on the colonial encounter – Germany has been the third important destination for Tunisian labour migrants in Europe. In contrast to France and Italy, where the presence of Tunisian citizens has historical roots

[30] http://www.ote.nat.tn/fileadmin/user_upload/doc/Repartition_de_la_communaute_tunisienne_a_l_etranger__2012.pdf; last accessed 29.11.2015

dating back to (pre)colonial times, Germany's labour migration policy that relied on the conclusion of bilateral labour agreements was the driving force for the growing presence of a Tunisian community in the former Federal Republic of Germany FRG (see Rass 2010:167ff). Until the conclusion of the first bilateral labour agreement between Tunisia and Germany and the promotion of temporal labour migration in 1965, the two countries did not have a particular close historical relationship. Although the agreement intended to restrict Tunisian labour migration to temporary and circular migration patterns, it marked the beginning of a noteworthy permanent presence of Tunisians in Germany. Today, the Tunisian community in Germany counts 86'601 people according to the latest available numbers from 2012 of the Tunisian OTE.[31] Unlike France, a major part of Tunisian labour migration was regulated through the 1965 bilateral agreement and its follow-up agreements. Entering the country with a tourist visa and applying afterwards for a regularisation of residence and work permit was never a common practice in Germany for Tunisian migrants.

In contrast to France and Italy as the two countries with close historical connections dating back to the colonial period and Germany with the conclusion of a bilateral labour migration agreement in 1965, Switzerland has never belonged to the major countries of destination for Tunisian labour migrants. Switzerland's traditional reservoir of labour migration was mainly Italy (d'Amato

[31] www.ote.nat.tn/fileadmin/user_upload/doc/Repartition_de_la_communaute_tunisienne_a_l_etranger__2012.pdf; last accessed 05.12.2015

2008). In contrast to Germany, Tunisia and Switzerland never concluded a bilateral migration agreement that would have institutionalised and accelerated Tunisian labour migration to Switzerland. For this reason, the Tunisan community in Switzerland has remained comparatively small, it has been growing only slowly, and it has remained a rather heterogenous group consisting of political refugees during the two authoritarian regimes of Bourguiba and Ben Ali, students, and individuals who were married to Swiss partners. (Tejada and Garcia Delahaye 2014).

A further group – and this will be the main focus for the rest of this study – consists of former Tunisian asylum seekers who remained on the territory after their asylum application was rejected, living in Switzerland without any residence permit as so-called *sans-papiers*. In short, the Tunisian community in Switzerland is small and highly heterogeneous. According to the latest available data from the *Office des tunisiens à l'étranger* OTE, the Tunisian community counted 16'667 fellow citizens in Switzerland in 2012.[32] Its majority lives in the French speaking part of Switzerland, especially in the *arc lémanique* region between Lausanne and Geneva.

This overview of transnational migration patterns of Tunisians between the two shores of the Mediterranean shows the influence of the historical past and the

[32] http://www.ote.nat.tn/fileadmin/user_upload/doc/Repartition_de_la_communaute_tunisienne_a_l_etranger__2012.pdf; last accessed 01.12.2015

different regulatory frameworks. The comparison of Tunisian labour migration to France and to Germany respectively shows that the pre-existing colonial ties were decisive in shaping transnational migration patterns of Tunisians. For this reason, the France has the oldest and largest community of Tunisians. Germany on the other hand does not have this colonial history with Tunisia that resulted in pre-existing transnational networks. The country chose a different approach. Through the conclusion of bilateral labour agreements – Tunisia is just one example among others – Germany imported the work force needed for its post-war economic boom. However, in both cases the economy's need for an abundant reservoir of unskilled labour migration was one of the major driving forces that shaped Germany and France's migration policy respectively. Unlike France, Switzerland does not share a colonial past with Tunisia in the same and unmediated way than the former occupying colonial force, and unlike Germany, the two countries never concluded a bilateral migration agreement for temporal labour migration. For this reason, the number of Tunisian citizens with a permanent residence status in Switzerland remained comparatively low.

Tunisia's Governance of Transnational Mobility

While the previous parts discussed the governance of labour migration from a perspective from the Northern shores of the Mediterranean with an emphasis on France, Germany, and Switzerland as three contrasting cases, the following part focuses on Tunisia and asks how it governed departure and return of its fellow citizens in a historical perspective.

Considering Tunisia's migration policy, it is possible to distinguish three predominant strategies throughout the last couple of decades; firstly, facilitating and encouraging labour migration in order to cope with high unemployment rates, secondly, the strengthening of transnational ties of the Tunisian community abroad, and thirdly, the surveillance of the Tunisian communities abroad, especially those who escaped the country for political reasons.[33]

As of today, around ten percent of Tunisia's population lives abroad. This considerably important and growing population of Tunisians is not only a resource of wealth for the country in terms of remittances, but also a population that exercises its influence in Tunisian politics. In the long history of Tunisia's autocratic state system during the Bourguiba and the Ben Ali governments, many dissidents have left the country and continued their political struggle from outside. They belong to different political camps, either of the radical left who was especially persecuted under Bourguiba, or to political Islamic groups, who were the main opponents of the Ben Ali regime since the late 80ies. For this reason, Tunisia's migration policy was always considered as security policy as well: The security policy logic of the authoritarian governments called for the

[33] One has to recall that between Tunisia's independence in 1956 and the popular uprising in 2010/2011 that resulted in the fall of the Ben Ali regime, the Tunisian republic had only two presidents throughout its history as an independent country; Habib Bourguiba and his successor Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. Both built their political power on autocratic regimes that surveyed and prosecuted any opposition forces with determination.

tight control of the Tunisian population also abroad and not only in the country, as the French political scientist Béatrice Hibou (2006b) recalls.

This aspect of control and surveillance of the population even abroad is an important detail. Its origins date back long before Ben Ali came to power in the coup in 1987 against his predecessor Habib Bourguiba. However, the authoritarian state system was established under Habib Bourguiba already, the first president of independent Tunisia and the only predecessor of Ben Ali. One of the most important instruments for monitoring the emigrating population was the introduction of an exit permit. As early as in the 1960s, Tunisians were required an exit permit in order to leave the country legally (see Bruno 2010:69f). Depending on the dominant current political conjuncture, there were times when it was easier to obtain this permit and other times where the authorities applied the rules stricter.

This attempt to keep a sharp eye on the population abroad was in tension with the country's attempt to promote and facilitate labour migration in order to cope with high unemployment rates as a result of the partial de-industrialisation in the context of the withdrawal of the former colonial power and the repatriation of large parts of the industry back to mainland France. In addition to the prospect that labour migration could be a partial solution of high unemployment rates, it had the additional benefit of future remittances of the fellow citizens working abroad. It was expected that these remittances would help to stimulate the domestic economy. Both the securitarian logic and the economic logic relied

on the premise that the authoritarian state apparatus knows its citizens even abroad (see Hibou 2006b).

However, only under the Ben Ali regime started the systematic development of an administrative structure that develops and maintains close ties to Tunisia's fellow citizens living abroad. The scattered and sparse attempts to address Tunisia's emigrants were merged in the structure of the *Office des Tunisiens à l'Étranger* (OTE), established in 1988.[34] According to its statutory mandate, it promotes and organises Tunisian emigration in accordance with the bilateral treaties that concern especially labour migration and migration for the purpose of study. However, the OTE offices – in general integrated into the respective embassy of the country – also provided further services to the Tunisian community abroad. It offered social assistance services and other services one could qualify as tourism promotion. For example, on a regular basis the OTE offered and promoted special discounts for flight and ferry tickets of the national air carrier *Tunisair* and the ferry companies respectively during the summer holidays. Furthermore, the OTE offices promote cultural programmes, thereby reinforcing *„l'attachement des enfants des tunisiens résident à l'étranger à leur patrie"* (the attachment to their homeland of the children of Tunisians living abroad), as the Tunisian law pathetically stipulates on of the OTE's function.[35]

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[34] Art. 14. Loi No 60-88 du 02. juin 1988. (published in JORT No. 39, 10.06.1988) The legislation's main aim is to develop „une politique d'encadrement et d'assistance des tunisiens résident à l'étranger".

[35] JORT No. 39, 10.06.1988, p. 824

In other words, the Tunisian migration policy targets even children of Tunisian migrants, who were born in France, Italy, or elsewhere, and who know Tunisia only from their parents' narratives and the usual annual summer holidays in Hammamet, Nabeul, Sousse, or Djerba. This is an example that shows how the Tunisian state contributes actively to the formation of a transnational space of migration – materially and discursively.

The OTE limits its scope not to the traditional low-skilled labour migration, but explicitly targets the Tunisian elites living abroad as well. The office states its purpose as follows:

> *„Les compétences tunisiennes à l'étranger, opérant dans les domaines scientifiques, économiques, culturels et artistiques occupent une place centrale dans les programmes et les activités destinés aux Tunisiens à l'étranger vu leur rôle de premier plan dans l'impulsion de l'économie nationale […]."*[36]

This quote highlights, how the state considers its fellow citizens living abroad as an important factor for the domestic economy. This broad aim of the OTE to incorporate Tunisian citizens living abroad in manifold ways is an issue of lively and sometimes controversial debates among the Tunisian population abroad, as I discovered during fieldwork. Especially political refugees followed the OTE's

[36] http://www.ote.nat.tn/index.php?id=91; last accessed 05.05.2016

promotion of cultural activities with suspicion, yet the image seems to be changing since 2011, and they no longer consider the OTE as the extension of the secret service abroad.

Beyond this soft governance of transnational mobility by the Tunisian state, there are further and more concrete interventions and practices that aim at the governance of transnational mobility of Tunisians. An important tool is the conclusion of bilateral migration agreements, in particular with several European countries. As an interesting detail, Tunisia and the respective other contracting states frame the content of these agreements in entirely different ways. While Tunisia emphasises the parts of the agreement that stipulates the opportunities for – often temporary – migration for work and education purposes, the other side in general highlights the aspect of migration control. The following example shows the different readings of such agreements.

In 2013, Tunisia concluded a bilateral mobility partnership with the European Union (*Déclaration conjointe pour le partenariat de mobilité entre la Tunisie, l'Union Européenne et ses etats membres participants*).[37] The year before, the Tunisian republic concluded a similar bilateral agreement with Switzerland

[37] http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/e-library/documents/policies/international-affairs/general/docs/declaration_conjointe_tunisia_eu_mobility_fr.pdf; last accessed 11.02.2016

concerning migration issues.[38] In general these agreements are not more than vague declarations of intent; and often the realisation of its content depends on political constellations and power relations. However, a closer examination of the genealogy of the bilateral agreement between Tunisia and Switzerland reveals completely different readings of the same text.[39] Parts of the agreement between Tunisia and Switzerland have been realised before the Tunisian parliament has even ratified the agreement, while other parts have remained dead letter until today. Concluded in 2012, the main part of the agreement deals with the issue of return migration. According to the text, Tunisia is obliged to take back its fellow citizens who were not granted asylum in Switzerland. In return, Switzerland establishes a program for assisted voluntary return AVR that grants financial help for returning Tunisian asylum seekers. When the Tunisian parliament ratified this agreement almost two years later, Tunisian newspapers reported about the agreement, echoing the Tunisian government's enthusiasm over the perspective the agreement offers especially for young Tunisians.[40] The

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[38] Protocole d'entente entre le conseil fédéral Suisse et le gouvernement de la République Tunisienne concernant l'instauration d'un partenariat migratoire, https://www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/internationales/internat-zusarbeit/bilaterales/keine-sr-nr/20120611-verstaendigungsprot-TUN-f.pdf; last accessed 14.03.2016. This main agreement is completed by two further agreements; one concerns the exchange of young professionals (accord entre la Confédération Suisse et la République Tunisisenne relatif à l'échange de jeunes professionels: https://www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/internationales/internat-zusarbeit/bilaterales/keine-sr-nr/20120611-verstaendigungsprot-TUN-f.pdf; last accessed 14.03.2016) and a migration agreement that addresses almost exclusively the issue of clandestine migration of Tunisian citizens and their readmission by the Tunisian authorities (Accord de coopération en matière de migration entre la Confédération Suisse et la République Tunisienne, https://www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/internationales/internat-zusarbeit/bilaterales/keine-sr-nr/20120611-vertrag-mig-zusarbeit-TUN-f.pdf; last accessed 14.03.2016)

[39] For a detailed discussion of the agreement, see also the chapter on the governance of voluntariness.

[40] See JORT No. 32, 22.04.2014, p. 939. La Presse 23.04.2014, p. 1, Le Temps 23.04.2014, p. 1.

articles praised the opportunities for young professionals to benefit from the possibility of an internship in Swiss companies for a couple of months. However, these newspaper reports missed an important detail: While parts of the agreement (in particular Tunisia's obligation for the readmission of Tunisian asylum seekers) have been in operation for a long time already, other parts have remained dead letter – in particular the exchange programme for young Tunisian professionals. Not a single young Tunisian had been to Switzerland on an internship with this programme at the time the newspaper reports were published.

From the Figure of the Labour Migrant to the *Harraga*

So far, the discussion how the different states govern the transnational space of mobility between the two shores of the Mediterranean for Tunisian migrants has focused on labour migration. Only the last paragraph gave a brief hint to another form of mobility as the target of governance; clandestine migration. The following part examines how the governance of labour migration and of clandestine migration is intertwined. Furthermore, it discusses how the restrictions in the domain of labour migration produced the figure of the clandestine migrant. In Tunisan colloquial language, this figure is called *harraga.*

The brief discussion of the case of France has already shown how the migration policy has successively tightened the rules for labour migration. While in particular Italy has maintained a liberal migration policy towards Tunisian

migrants for a long time, the ongoing integration of the EU countries towards a common space of migration policy under the Dublin and Schengen regulatory framework has forced even Italy to restrict the possibilities of labour migration for third country nationals. To put it simple, labour migration – with the exception of the rare cases of high-skilled labour migration – disappeared and gave way to a new form of migration practices of Tunisians; the *harraga*.[41] As a particular form of clandestine migration, the *harraga* has become an issue since the second half of the 1990s. In everyday language in Tunisia, but also in the other countries in North Africa, *harraga* refers to the clandestine crossing of the Mediterranean by small boats. This practice is intimately linked to the externalisation of the European border control. With respect to Algeria, Collyer (2012) estimates that the *harraga* as a high-risk strategy of migration has emerged around the year 2000 (see also Ben-Yehoyada 2011). In Tunisia, this type of clandestine migration has emerged more or less at the same time. Some authors date its origin a bit earlier around the year 1990 (e.g. Boubakri 2004; Mabrouk 2010). A major impact was the introduction of the visa obligation for Tunisian citizens by the Italian state, which marked the end of the Italian exception in Europe with regard to the governance of Tunisian migration. Before this change, Italy was an important entry point for Tunisian migrants. Either, they remained

[41] For the genealogy of the term, see the comments in the introduction.

in Italy, or they continued their migration trajectory as clandestine migrants to other European countries.

In his study on clandestine Tunisian migration, Mehdi Mabrouk (2010: 124ff) gives an overview of the Tunisian *harraga* and identifies four main regions of departure. From north to south, these regions are the Cap Bon Peninsula with Kélibia and El Haouaria as the main villages, the region around Sfax, and the South, in general with Zarzis as one of the main points of departure. The uprising against the autocratic regime of Ben Ali that started in December 2011 and the subsequent breakdown of the government on the 14 January 2011 resulted in a short period of sharp rising numbers of *harraga* departures (Boubakri 2013). According to a Frontex report from 2011, between January and March 2011 20'258 Tunisians arrived at Lampedusa by boat; the small Italian island, which is the most Southern part of Italy, little more than 100 kilometers away from the Tunisian shores.[42] Although this appeared to be an unprecedent situation and depicted as such by mass media, a superficial look back in history reveals that there were other moments in the recent history of Tunisian migration with sharply rising numbers of *harraga*-departures over a short time. For example in 2008, Lampedusa already witnessed a similar number of Tunisian *harragas* arriving over a short period at its shores. And similar to the situation in early 2011, the 2008 clandestine migration was linked to a political

[42] Frontex (2011): FRAN Quarterly, Issue 1, January-March 2011; http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/FRAN_Q1_2011.pdf; last accessed 15.04.2016

event in Tunisia; the popular revolt in the Gafsa mining basin (Boubakri 2013:2ff). In the aftermath of the crushed uprising, many young Tunisians opted for the *harraga*, escaping political repression and economic depression with extremely high unemployment rates especially among the younger population.

Tunisia has reacted in different ways to the emerging phenomenon of the *harraga*. Until the late 1990s, the *harraga* was rarely an issue for the Tunisian government. This changed at the beginning of this century. The government introduced a series of laws penalising illegal emigration.[43] Law No. 2004/ 6 that modifies law No. 1975/ 75-40 from 1975 is the most important regulation concerning the illegal emigration from Tunisia.[44] It stipulates prison sentences and heavy fines for Tunisians and foreigners alike who leave the territory on an irregular way, or who assist in the unlawful escape from Tunisian territory. The individual articles remain strikingly vague and allow a lot of space for interpretation. For example, there is no legal definition of the term migrant, but the law evokes at the same time terms as foreigner (*étranger*), exit (*sortie*) and entry (*entrée*), as Mabrouk (2010: 114ff) and El Madmad (2004: 109-136) highlight. From a legal point of view, the most critical aspect of this law is that it conflates human smuggling and the individual act of escaping irregularly

[43] Note that the requirement of an exit permit has been existed for a long time already. However, ignoring this obligation was rarely punished in practice.

[44] JORT No. 11, 06.02.2004, p. 252ff

Tunisian territory.[45] This means that a human smuggler and a clandestine migrant are treated under the very same law.

The vague character of this law is typical for the Tunisian legislation of the Ben Ali era. It gives prosecutors ample space for interpretation that might turn into arbitrariness quite easily. There is no reliable information concerning the application of these laws, especially concerning possible sentences issued against clandestine Tunisian migrants. However, according to several legal specialists I interviewed on this topic, it does not seem to be a law that is actively applied to cases of clandestine Tunisian migrants. Rather, it is applied to cases of so-called organised human smuggling, yet even with respect to these cases, it seems to be a rather random application of this law.[46]

With regard to the shift from the governance of labour migration to the emergence of the figure of the *harraga* and the governance of clandestine migration from a perspective of the Tunisian state, let me retain the following aspects. Tunisia has actively promoted labour migration in the 1960ies and 1970ies. It has facilitated labour migration with the conclusion of bilateral labour migration agreements, as the discussion of the example of Germany

[45] Critical migration studies have formulated a detailed critique of the term human smuggling as it carries a normative notion. Instead, these studies suggest the more neutral term facilitator. I follow this line of argument and use the term "human smuggling" or "human trafficking" only as an emic term and not as a descriptive or analytical term.

[46] With respect to the legal situation in the context of return migration. see also Benjemia (2008).

shows. A large population of Tunisian workers abroad signifies high remittances that stimulate the domestic economy. At the same time, labour migration is a means to export the domestic surplus labour force. The governance of Tunisian migration is further driven by security concerns of the Tunisian state as highlighted by Hibou (2006b). The surveillance of its population abroad has always been accompanied Tunisian migration policies.

The recent development with the conclusion or the renewal of bilateral migration agreements has introduced a shift with regard to this aspect. In this case, it combines return migration with the idea of development. It is a way for European countries to "export" undesirable and unproductive labour migration force back to the country of origin. For the Tunisian state, the promised development projects contribute to the development of the rural areas, which is a declared objective of any Tunisian government since the 2011 uprising.

The Governance of Return Migration: Switzerland as a Case Study

I conclude this chapter with a discussion of the governance of return migration as a further structuring element of this space. Launched in 2012 by Switzerland's migration authorities, the programme for assisted voluntary return migration for Tunisian asylum seekers (the so-called *Länderprogramm Tunesien* in German) was not the first of its kind. In the years before, Switzerland has already realised other country programmes since the year 2000; for example, the programme for Sri Lanka between 2000 - 2004, the programme for Angola between 2002 -

2007, or the programme for Armenia 2004 - 2008 (Kaser and Schenker 2008). The programmes are designed to facilitate the so-called voluntary return for asylum seekers from these countries.

However, the origins of assisted return can be traced back to the end of the 1950ies (Kaser and Schenker 2008). At that time, it had a completely different significance; assisted return was an ad-hoc decision on a case-by-case basis. It was not actively promoted, and it aimed at assisting individual migrants who would like to return to their country of origin but lack the necessary economic means. Neither the idea of governing migration flows through assisted return, nor the idea of the nexus between migration and development was linked to assisted return. Both became major points of reference for the programmes for assisted voluntary return migration only later. In short, in the beginning assisted return was nothing more than a simple administrative tool to provide fast and unbureaucratic financial assistance to individuals who decided to return to their country of origin and who lacked the necessary economic resources.

It was as late as in the second half of the 1990ies – especially since the launch of the specific and temporally limited *Länderprogramme* (country programmes) – when assisted return has turned into a distinct pillar of Switzerland's migration policy. In addition, the issue of rejected asylum seekers has become a highly contested and politicised issue at the same time; not only in Switzerland, but in Europe in general (see International Organisation of Migration 2004; Broeders 2010). While forced deportation is an ineffective, expensive, and morally

questionable instrument to remove rejected asylum seekers from the national territory (see Fekete 2005), so-called assisted voluntary return migration has become an appealing alternative for state authorities and heavily promoted by the International Organisation for Migration IOM in particular (see Geiger 2009). This trend has been accompanied by the conclusion of numerous bilateral readmission agreement (Cassarino 2010).

In Switzerland, the "invention" of the programmes for assisted voluntary return migration is linked to the end of the Balkan wars in the 1990s. At that time, Switzerland granted temporary and collective projection for refugees from the Balkans during the war. With the end of the war, the government terminated the temporary admission of these war refugees. Suddenly, a significant number of people found itself without any protection and residence permit in Switzerland. They were obliged to return into their country of origin; a country devastated by war and with a weak economy that was only gradually recovering. As a consequence, Switzerland designed its first programme for voluntary return migration for Bosnian refugees. This marked the beginning of a new era of assisted return; away from an ad-hoc and individual instrument of unbureaucratic assistance towards a main pillar of Switzerland's migration policy and the attempt to govern transnational mobility. Often, these programmes were accompanied by bilateral migration agreements, or – at least – bilateral readmission agreements.

Two distinct ideas characterise the paradigm shift in the approach to return migration through the introduction of the *Länderprogramme.* First, the creation of these *Länderprogramme* is connected to the emerging idea that migration flows can and should be governed not only through the regulation of the admission, but also through the management of the departure. And second, with the *Länderprogramme* a novel idea gained traction: the management of migration and issues of development should be considered in a coherent and integrated approach.

Especially this second idea has made a remarkable career and became some sort of a new paradigm of development policy, in the literature often termed as the migration/ development nexus (e.g. Gosh 2000; Kilic et al. 2009; de Haas 2010; Glick Schiller and Faist 2010; Kunz 2013). In particular the International Orgnisation for Migration IOM has positioned itself as one of the main actors in this field and has intensively promoted the idea of the migration/ development nexus. The predominant narrative is that programmes that link migration management with development issues contribute to the fight against undocumented migration. However, this causal link between the decrease of undocumented migration and the promotion of regional development in the country of origin has been proofed wrong in several studies (e.g. de Haas 2010).

Switzerland distinguishes two types of so-called assisted voluntary return migration. Typically, the already-mentioned *Länderprogramme* are limited in time and scope and run for three to four years in general. Often, they are more

or less immediate responses to fast increasing numbers of asylum seekers of a country or region, as it was the case for the programme for assisted voluntary return migration for Tunisians in 2012. Or they are designed to accompany other changes in migration policies, such as the termination of a collective temporal admission of asylum seekers, as it was the case with the return of war refugees after the Balkan wars in the 1990s. *Länderprogramme* are actively promoted among asylum seekers. Sometimes, specific structures are established in the country of origin for the duration of these programs to accompany the migrants after their return. In general, country programmes benefit of higher budgets and are able to finance larger projects.

The individual return migration assistance is the second form of assisted return. It is not restricted to certain countries and open to any asylum seeker. Even recognised refugees are eligible for individual return migration assistance. The different forms of return migration assistance are regulated in article 90 of Switzerland's Asylum Act from 1998 (SR 142.31), and in article 69 of the Foreign Nationals Law from 2005 (SR 142.20).[47] Subordinated ordinances, conduct orders, and regulations expatiate the two articles.

As any other country program, the Tunisian programme for assisted voluntary return is further regulated in a series of circulars (so-called *Rundschreiben*), issued

[47] Art. 90 Asylgesetz (SR 142.31) and Art. 60 Bundesgesetz über die Ausländerinnen und Ausländer (SR. 142.20). Both articles stipulate that the government is responsible for the implementation of assisted return.

by the State Secretariat of Migration SEM.[48] These *Rundschreiben* specify the details of the programmes, as they vary from each *Länderprogramm* to the other. The *Rundschreiben* are binding regulations for the return migration bureaucrats on national or cantonal level.

[48] The first *Rundschreiben Nr. 8 zu Weisung III / 4.2.*, dating from 10.07.2013 explains in detail the procedures for the programme. See www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/rechtsgrundlagen/weisungen/asyl/rueckkehr-_und_wiedereingliederungshilfe/rs/20120710-rs-rkh-TUN-d.pdf; last accessed 22.05.2016). The subsequent circulars provide information on smaller adjustments of the programme, or they just announce the extension of the programme.

V. Border as Experience

Chapter Five explores the border regime from the perspective of six Tunisian migrants. The focus of this chapter is the question how border is experienced through the narratives of Tunisian *harragas*. The migration biographies represent in an exemplarily way the manifold experiences of the *harraga* and return. Through their biographies, this chapter traces the transnational space of mobility of clandestine Tunisian migrants. The chapter starts with some preliminary remarks on the ethics of interviews in the specific context of the experience of Tunisian migrants in their encounter with state authorities. These remarks connect to the comments on the method of biographical interviews in Chapter 3. The second part is devoted to the voices of six Tunisian migrants and their individual migration biographies. The presentation and discussion of the interviews follows a similar structure for each case. It starts with the reconstruction of the migration biography where the voice and the perspective

of the informant is a key element. It then aims at placing this individual experience of transnational mobility in its wider context. The ambition is to find a balance between giving credit to the individual and existential experience of transnational mobility, and simultaneously highlighting that these experiences are effects of larger social formations.

Although this dissertation focuses on the governance of return migration through its study of Switzerland's programme for assisted voluntary return migration for Tunisian migrants, the sample of biographies deliberately exceeds this narrow focus. In order to capture the experience of departure and return and to explore how this experience is structured through the governance of transnational mobility, I decided to include the biography of one informant, who used similar migration strategies already in the 1960s and can therefore be considered as a *harraga avant la lettre*. This allows a historical comparison and shows that it is less the migration strategies that have changed, but rather the regime that governs transnational mobility. For similar reasons the following sample of migration biographies includes also the case of a young Tunisian, who actually never managed to leave the country. For him, the *harraga* is as much an obsession than it is an imagination.

The first case is the migration biography of *Fathi.* He is an unmarried man around 35 years old, living with his retired parents. Born in a family of fishermen, Fathi has become a fisherman too. He has a long experience as a clandestine migrant. His first *harraga* dates back to the year 2000. After applying

for asylum in Switzerland, he decided to apply for a return migration project, and returned to his natal village in 2014, where he has started to work as an independent fisherman. The second case is *Amine*, an independent vegetable farmer, who owns a small plot of land. He is another return migrant I came to know via the local return migration office in Tunisia. In contrast to Fathi, he migrated only once in 2011, when he seized the opportunity to escape the country in the 2010/2011 uprising. After his return, he has started to grow vegetables on his father's land with the financial assistance of the return migration project he applied for. Amine can be considered as the prototype of a clandestine migrant as imagined in the AVR programmes and by the return migration bureaucrats. The third case is *Yassine*, a young man in his twenties. He is a waiter in a modest café near La Marsa. My acquaintance with him is pure serendipity: I first met him in a café I used to visit when I was living in the neighbourhood. Till now, his *harraga* is only an imagination – rather a faint idea than a concrete plan. Yassine's story highlights how the narratives of the *harraga* and the European border regime have effects on those who are not able to claim their right to transnational mobility successfully. The fourth case of the sample is *Kaïs*, a young Tunisian who never reached Europe. Obsessed by the idea of going to Europe, he made several attempts to escape Tunisia. Trapped between several low paid jobs as a day labourer, the *harraga* is an attempt to realise upward social mobility through horizontal transnational mobility. The fifth case is *Foued*, whom I met in Switzerland. He was living in a small town not far away from my home town. As a former asylum seeker, he decided to remain in

Switzerland and escaped the asylum system – at least for the moment. He rejected the offer of the AVR programme for an assisted return to Tunisia. His case highlights what happens to those who escape the return migration bureaucracy. And finally, as the sixth case there is the migration biography of *Abdellah*, who I introduced already briefly in the preliminary vignette. In the 1960s and 1970s, he was working as a labour migrant on French construction sites. His case contrasts the migration experiences of the younger generation. It highlights how the very same migration practices have completely different effects today. His case underlines my argument that it is rather the administration of transnational mobility that has changed and less the migration practices.

Interviewing Clandestine Migrants: Ethical Considerations

Placing the migration biographies and experiences centre stage has two reasons: an analytical and an ethical one. The second chapter discussed the thesis of the autonomy of migration AOM and concluded that it is an approach that allows to capture at the same time the migrants' agency and the effects of the border regime on individual migration trajectories. Using the subjective narratives of transnational mobility of clandestine migrants is the attempt to transfer the theoretical claim of the thesis of the AOM to a methodological approach. This is not without pitfalls.

In "La misère du monde", Pierre Bourdieu argues that interviews always establish a very delicate and problematic relationship between the interviewer and his or her informant (Bourdieu 1993). It is the interviewer who defines the topic and who leads the conversation. Although Bourdieu acknowledges that the interview itself is always a co-construction between interviewer and informant, it is the former who keeps the interpretative power over the material after the conversation. He or she interprets the material, draws connections between different statements, and, most important, gives sense to what has been said. It is a second-order interpretation in the sense as it explores meanings of meanings.

According to Bourdieu, it is impossible to eliminate the unequal relationship between interviewer and informant.[49] The researcher's task is to control this inequality and reflect it. This reflexivity distinguishes the researcher from a journalist. Bourdieu calls his method straightforward *"comprendre"* (comprehension). *"Ne pas déplorer, ne pas rire, ne pas détester, mais comprendre"* (Bourdieu 1993: 7) is the guideline for research in "La misère du monde."

This is not only a methodological standpoint but takes also a political and normative stance. Guided by an empathic attitude towards the informants, it gives a voice to the voiceless without simply adopting their perspective. In

[49] In anthropology, there is a lively debate how to overcome this unequal relationship and level the field of power over interpretations. Ideas such as co-research or even co-authorship aim at going beyond the acknowledgment of the unequal relationship and the particular ethical responsibility of the researcher, suggesting concrete tools to create new and equal relationships between researcher and informant (i.e. Scheper-Hughes 1995; Lassiter 2005; Hale 2006). For a broader review of this discussion, see Holmes and Marcus (2008).

response to this methodological (and political) requirement, Bourdieu suggests a strategy of proximity to bridge the differences between interviewer and informant. What he has in mind with the term proximity is the distance in social space. The prototypical academic researcher with his or her middle-class background is far from the informant's socio-economic situation, who witness the social suffering in contemporary society (thus far the book's subtitle). For "La misère du monde", Bourdieu put together a team of interviewer and co-authors who occupy a similar place than the informants in the social space. Due to a comparable socialisation of the interviewer and the informant, and as a consequence an assumed similar *habitus* of the two, this arrangement contributes to a better understanding of the informant's lived experiences, thus far Bourdieu's (1993) argument in a nutshell.

However, Bourdieu did not provide a proper argument, why proximity in the social field would solve the epistemological problem of understanding the other's standpoint. Proximity does not automatically guarantee a more accurate understanding of the informant's positioning in the social field, neither does it guarantee more empathy towards the lived experiences of the informant. This assumption relies on the false premise that individual and shared experience implies a better and more nuanced understanding of the informant's situation.

An appropriate interpretation of a social situation does not rely necessarily on shared experiences in the past. Furthermore, Bourdieu's approach of creating proximity between interviewer and informant does not address the symbolic

violence at stake in the interview situation per se. In addition, there are further aspects that have to be taken into account. For example, conducting an interview with someone who shares a similar socio-economic background and similar experiences may indeed operate as a facilitator to gain the informant's confidence for a first period. However, it might create other blind spots, as shared experience tends to render too many things as self-evident facts not worth talking about or reflecting upon.

Shaping the Relationship Between Interviewer and Informant

My own approach to conduct biographical interviews with clandestine Tunisian migrants violates Bourdieu's imperative of proximity in several ways. I do not share many common experiences with my informants and we occupy radically different places in the social field; especially with regard to the possibilities of exercising the right of transnational mobility. Conducting interviews with clandestine Tunisian migrants as a researcher with a residence permit in a European country and a Swiss passport in the pocket, I am immediately confronted with the socio-economic inequalities.[50] Practices of mobility and immobility were at the heart of the conversations between me as a researcher and the informants. We were talking about transnational migration trajectories and

[50] In this context, Torpey (2000) argues that the passport is an indispensable tool to exercise one's freedom of movement. At the same time, it is essential to the state's monopolisation of the legitimate means of movement, and thereby contributes to the state control of movements.

the experiences of crossing borders. At the same time, the conditions that made this very encounter possible, depended on a high degree of mobility from my side as a researcher: The subject of the conversation and the particular conditions that make that very conversation possible at all were highly entangled. The driving force for these encounters were not a shared socio-economic background and similar experiences made in the past, but rather the completely different experience of the same situation.

However, the socio-economic conditions for mobile practices were just one aspect that structured these encounters. In addition to the socio-economic conditions, nationality itself was of similar importance that structured the experience of transnational mobility. Let me explain this aspect with the following episode: During my fieldwork in Tunisia, I met a young Tunisian who had just started working for a small international NGO active in the field of refugee assistance. Before his stint in the refugee NGO, he had worked as a trainee for another organisation aiming at the "strengthening of civil society", as it is often called in the jargon of international and local NGOs working in Tunisia. As many fellow citizens of middle-class origin and with a degree in higher education, starting a career in the international NGO world opens the prospect of building a network of transnational contacts with colleagues all over the world. Meetings and trainings in different part of the world allow a high degree of transnational mobility. He enjoyed this cosmopolitan lifestyle (probably much more than I do). With his age, his educational and socio-economic background, he shared many similarities with me, and in this regard,

he was much closer to me than to his fellow citizen who, as a *harraga*, lacked of the socio-economic means that would allow him to travel the world. In short, we occupied a similar place in the social field and at first sight, our patterns of mobility were quite comparable. Despite these similarities, our experiences of transnational mobility differed in fundamental ways, as a result of our respective nationalities. Although he traveled the world as a young NGO worker, he faced much more difficulties, when he wanted to travel on his own. At this moment, he was no longer the cosmopolitan NGO worker, but a young Tunisian citizen, suspected of entering a country in the Global North illegally or overstaying and abusing the issued work or study visa.

This example shows that the socio-economic background and the regimes of transnational mobility that are shaped by the respective nationality of the border-crosser both entrench a fundamental distance between the researcher and the informant. Do we thus have to conclude with Bourdieu that a mutual understanding of the other's position in the social field is impossible?

Against Bourdieu's principle of social proximity, I would like to argue that an understanding is indeed possible across different positions in the social field. Social distance is an aspect that might complicate a mutual understanding, but it is not a categorical hindrance. Instead, I suggest an epistemology that can be

extracted from extended case method.[51] Any understanding of an individual and specific case does indeed rely on *the detailed reconstruction of the individual case* – which might be complicated by the different positions of researcher and informant –, but it relies at the same time also on the *detailed reconstruction of the relationship* between the individual case and the broader structure of society. Both the reconstruction of the micro- and the macro-level might be partial and incomplete, but the fact that they co-constitute each other gives the researcher a certain limited legitimacy of interpretation even of individual biographies. The informants are the experts of their own lives (much more than the researcher), but the researcher has certain analytical tools at its disposal to embed the individual case into the broader picture.

However, some anthropologists have pointed out a more general issue with representations. Especially the writing culture debate questioned the idea of representation in the spirit of classical ethnography (e.g. Clifford 1980, 1983). Discussing authority and representation in classical anthropology, Renato Rosaldo (2008) argued for example that information gathered under asymmetrical conditions has always and necessarily disciplining effects. Leaving aside for the moment the question whether this disciplining effect is inherently inscribed in any kind of ethnographic representation, let me translate Rosaldo's observation to the situation I am studying in this dissertation; the governance of

[51] See Chapter 3.

clandestine transnational mobility.[52] In the context of the asylum bureaucracy, the interview is one of the main techniques to gain information about the life of asylum seekers. These information serve indeed a disciplinary end, as they form the basis of the way the asylum bureaucracy processes the case. Or, to put it more drastically; the integration of migrants as asylum seekers in an asylum regime as part of the broader regime of the governance of mobility with its exclusionary logic is essentially based on interviews, as this is often the only available information, as there are no further documents that allow the reconstruction of the case.

However, there is at least one fundamental difference between the most empathic asylum bureaucrat and the worst ethnographer when they interview migrants. For the asylum bureaucrat, the interview is a technique to gather information and discover "the truth" about the asylum case brought forward by the asylum seeker. The interview is embedded in a migration bureaucracy and it does not serve to understand the asylum seeker's standpoint, but rather as a tool to gather the necessary information to process the case. All informants I encountered made the experience of being interviewed by state authorities; the police, border guards, or asylum bureaucrats. For the ethnographer, these circumstances turn the biographical interview as a means to gather ethnographic

[52] For a critique of the idea that representation always and inherently signifies domination, see Graeber (2012:122).

data and insights into the informants' trajectories and understand their perspective into a very delicate issue.

Asylum Interviews and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion

The interview, or rather the interrogation, is a very important step in the asylum procedure (see also Lawrence and Ruffer 2015: 2). Switzerland's asylum procedure serves as an example to illustrate this point. In general, during the asylum procedure asylum seekers have little written evidence to support their case. Identity papers, police summons, medical certificates, or other papers that would help to support an asylum application giving further evidence for the persecution of the asylum seeker by the state, are often missing. In the cases this dissertation follows, the young clandestine Tunisian migrants who arrived in 2011 in Switzerland claiming for asylum did even not submit any identity papers or other written means of evidence when they filed their cases. Either they have never had any identity papers at all (which is uncommon in the case of Tunisia), or they simply decided not to present them during the asylum procedure. In a situation with lacking identity documents and other written means of evidence such as legal judgements or arrest warrants, the only way to examine the asylum

application is the interview.[53] And as in any part of the administration, the interview has to take the form of a written document.

This principle of the written form follows Max Weber's *Aktenmässigkeit* (1922:651ff). Written evidence is the key to any decision-making process in the administration. In this case, this written evidence is created through the asylum interview: Through the hearing, the asylum seeker's oral testimony is transformed into a written document and becomes written evidence. However, it is never a verbatim transcript of what is said during the interview. The standard procedure does not include tape recording of the interview with a subsequent verbatim transcription. Rather, the written record is created right away during the interview by a minute-taker who assists at the hearing. The transcript is thus the co-product of the interviewer, the asylum seeker, the minute-taker, and a translator, who is in general present at the hearing as well. In certain cases, there is no minute-taker, and it is the interviewer's job to take care of the transcript. This multiple translation chain is one of the black boxes in the asylum procedure, and it is unavoidable that this multiple translation chain produces mistakes, or shifts in meanings. This specific setting and the administration's need to produce

[53] Fassin and d'Halluin (2005, 2007) show how medical proves and psychiatric expertise have become important in the French asylum procedure. They replace the lacking documents. At the same time, it indicates also a shift in the meaning of asylum as a right for politically persecuted persons to persons who are suffering. This means that suffering has become an important aspect in asylum policies, as Fassin and d'Halluin argue.

written evidence is one of the reasons why asylum interviews often turn into interrogations.

A further element contributes to the transformation of the asylum interview into an interrogation: According to the *UNHCR Handbook and Guidelines on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status*, which is the internationally recognized guideline for asylum applications, the burden of proof lies on the person submitting an asylum application.[54] This principle leaves a permanent shadow of doubt on the asylum seeker's narrative. Building on Ricoeur (1999), Lawrence and Ruffer call this "the hermeneutics of suspicion" (2015: 5; see also Stewart 1989). This hermeneutic of suspicion which is at the heart of the asylum procedure is in sharp contrast to Bourdieu's principle of *„comprendre"* (understanding). In contrast to the interview in an ethnographic setting, the virtue of an asylum interview is not empathy, but the establishment of facts, and the production of a written document that represents evidence for the decision-making process. Under the logics of the asylum procedure, narrating one's own biography changes its meaning entirely; the asylum seeker's biographical narrative is under permanent suspicion. Narrating one's biography is no longer a mean of self-affirmation, or the fashioning of a personal identity, but rather an administrative tool of subjugation and repression.

[54] UNHCR 2011: Handbook and Guidelines on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status. Geneva: UNHCR. http://www.unhcr.org/3d58e13b4.html; last accessed 09.12.2015

Asylum seekers are well aware of the importance of the asylum interview and what is at stake at that very moment. Among migrant communities, there is a rich record of knowledge, hearsay, and gossip around the question how a successful migration biography should look like in order to be recognised as a refugee. For this reason, it is a common and more or less deliberate strategy to shape narrated asylum biographies in order to fit presumed categories that qualify the asylum seeker as in need of protection. At the same time, this need to shape one's own migration biography according to the presumed categories imposed by the asylum apparatus contributes to the experience that the migration biography does no longer belong to the person. In short, many asylum seekers experience the asylum procedure as a form of alienation in the sense that one's very own biography has to be subjected to the asylum procedure and shaped in a specific way.

Narrating Migration Trajectories: Between Empowerment and Subjugation

The particular experience of clandestine migrants and their need to narrate and justify their migration biography in front of the asylum bureaucracy again and again has a major impact on ethnographic research in this context. The omnipresent hermeneutics of suspicion as an everyday experience of many of my informants had two opposite effects on my own research, when I was talking with my informants about their migration trajectories and their experiences. Either I was confronted with a situation of mistrust and reluctance to share one's

migration biography with a stranger. Given their experience made with the asylum bureaucracy, this is a highly understandable reaction. In such situations, trust building between the ethnographer and informants was a long, delicate, and often tedious endeavour. In certain cases, it failed completely: The narratives remained thin and superficial, when the interlocutors were willing to share their stories at all. In other cases, we managed to build an atmosphere of mutual understanding and trust that allowed informants to share intimate details of their migration biography, sometimes facts and experiences they even hide before their families.

At least in the very beginning, I often experienced a general mistrust against formal interviews. *"I am tired of these repeated interviews. I told my stories to different asylum officers so many times. It is no longer my story, and it is no longer my life"*, an informant justified his refusal to share his migration biography with me. For many clandestine migrants, the formal interview is closely associated with the often humiliating experience of the encounter with the asylum bureaucracy as described above. For this reason, I rather used informal conversations and meetings in groups to avoid this highly problematic association.

However, in other cases the past experience of the hermeneutics of suspicion in the context of the asylum bureaucracy resulted in precisely the opposite effect. In these cases, I was approached in a surprisingly open and direct way. I remember numerous situations when I barely knew an informant, and he already

started to share his migration experience with me. I often had the impression that sharing one's own migration biography with a stranger (i.e. the ethnographer) had some kind of a therapeutic effect: It was the attempt to regain authority over one's own migration biography after numerous asylum interviews in front of the asylum bureaucracy. The construction and narration of one's migration biography becomes a strategic and deliberate act, where the narrator is in full control of the narrative again, after many humiliating experiences, where an asylum bureaucrat listen to your story only to detect any inconsistencies and contradictions. In the open setting of an unstructured biographical interview that resembles more an informal conversation than an interview, it is the interviewee who decides what to disclose and what to keep secret; a possibility he is denied during the asylum interview where he has to subjugate not the narrative and himself to the logics of the asylum bureaucracy. Considered by some interlocutors as an outsider, they saw it as a chance to tell their migration biography again and without the constraints imposed on them as in the formal interview situation during the asylum procedure.

With these preliminary remarks on the ethics and politics of migration biographies of clandestine migrants, this chapter now gives voice to six Tunisians who tell their stories of departure and return, and share their experiences of crossing the transnational space of mobility between the two shores of the Mediterranean.

First Vignette: "You Are Completely Surrounded by the Sea"

Fathi's fishing boat laid in the bay, about hundred meters away from the beach.[55] His father's house could be found just behind the shore. Fathi was living there since his birth with both of his parents, sisters, and brothers. We took off our shoes and socks, rolled up our trousers and stepped into the water. It was a sunny day in September 2015, the water still pretty warm. A thick algae slick covered the sandy ground and gave the impression of wading through mud. Fathi quickly checked his watch and warned us that we have to return to the beach in an hour: High tide is arriving soon.

Wading through the water, Fathi explained that the actual fishing grounds were quite far away, beyond the Kerkennah islands, halfway to Lampedusa. *"Seven hours … at least"*, he estimated. As the captain and owner of the fishing boat, Fathi was responsible for finding the relevant spots with rich fishing grounds. He learnt the profession from scratch from his father, who was also a fisherman. Later, he accompanied his uncle and worked as a crew member under his supervision.

[55] I came in touch with Fathi through the local branch of the return migration office in 2014. Entering the field in this way structured the relationship between us. For him, I was associated with the return migration bureaucracy, and it took some time to establish a relationship of trust. As he was in a struggle with the local return migration officer over the financing of his return project, he was first reluctant to share many details of his migration trajectory with me. The relationship suddenly changed when he developed the idea that I could back his argumentation and strengthen his position in a dispute with the return migration officer.

Finally, we reached Fathi's boat. He helped me to climb on the vessel. The boat was small, not more than four or five meters long as I estimated, with a simple open deck and without a cabin. On one side of the deck, nets in different sizes were piled up, on the other side there were different polystyrene boxes to sort the fish and prepare it for sale on land. Fathi lit a cigarette and explained me in detail how he refurbished the vessel.

Initially, it was his uncle's boat and he bought it with the return assistance provided by the IOM. For this purpose, the organisation granted him 15'000 Swiss Francs. His uncle had retired from the fishery some years ago in 2011. At that time, he was already 64 years old and went to sea only occasionally. These occasional trips did not generate enough revenues to cover the expenses to pay the other crew members, taxes, the fuel, and the maintenance of the boat. Therefore, the uncle decided to give up his profession. Since then, Fathi's uncle was living on his pension and the fishing boat laid on the beach for several years, unused and slowly decaying.

When Fathi decided to buy the boat, a fresh coat of painting was overdue and the engine had to be replaced. "A boat has to be maintained. When you don't use it, it dries out and you can no longer use it," he explained. Throughout spring 2014, Fathi was working on the boat for over a month with a colleague. Before painting, they sanded off the old coating and replaced some planks, as he explained to me in great detail. But Fathi's whole pride was the new engine. *"40 chevaux!"* (40 horsepower), he exclaimed and opened the hatch to show me the

brand-new engine, when we sat on the boat and talked about his recently found profession as a fisherman.

It depends heavily on the weather conditions how many times Fathi could go to sea, he explained to me. The reason is simple. Costs for each journey are high and the revenues have to cover these costs. An exact calculation is needed:

> *"As the captain, I have to make a very precise calculation. For each journey, I pay 50 Dinars for the fuel. Then there are two crew members. Each one is paid 20 Dinars. Then I pay ten percent of the revenues to the carrier who brings the fishes to the main port. On an average, I can sell the catch for about 250 Dinars. At the end of the day, there are about 100 Dinars remaining. And then I have to calculate around 800 Dinars for fees and taxes, as well as for the maintenance of the vessel."*

Fathi earned about 500 Dinars a month on the average, he estimated. This was much more than he earned before when he was working as an ordinary crew member on his uncle's boat. *"It was never more than 100 or 150 Dinars, …and less in bad months"*, he remembered.

Even though Fathi comes from a family of fishermen, it is more by chance that he is now a boat owner and goes to sea as a captain. In 2000, Fathi left Tunisia for the first time, shortly after he finished school at the age of 18. He was looking

for a job and knew other young men from Jebiniana, the village a bit in the North of Sfax where he grew up, who were living in Italy already.

> *"In Jebiniana, there was never much work. There was the possibility for an ‚Initiation à la vie professionelle'; a work experience paid by the state. You work for 15 days on a construction site and you earn 60 Dinars. You can figure out by yourself how much they pay per day; 4 Dinars! Therefore, I decided to join my friends who were working in Italy."*

At that time, it was not very difficult to find an opportunity to leave Tunisia, as Fathi recalled. Departures from the region where he was living were facilitated by the geographical proximity to Lampedusa and by the abundant availability of no-longer used fishing vessels. The small-scale, family-based coast fishing industry – a former backbone of the local economy – was in decline since years. Fathi's uncle was just one fisherman among many others who decided to abandon the fishing activity. While some boats were sold for their last one-way trip to Lampedusa as *harraga* boats, the boat of Fathi's uncle remained unused on the beach – slowly decaying.

Fathi left Tunisia by boat, as many others did in these days. He disembarked in Lampedusa and was transferred to Catania a few days later, the second largest city in Sicily and its economic centre.

For the majority of his travel companions, it was the first time they were on the open sea he remembered. Not so Fathi. As a fisherman, he was used to go to sea. Nonetheless, he experienced this passage completely different than an ordinary fishing expedition. "*It was an exciting moment to see Lampedusa coming into view on the horizon"*, he explained. *"Like a dream comes true."*

This exciting feeling of a departure into a new adventure did not last for a long time. Quickly, he became aware that it was hard to find a job. Without an extensive network in Sicily, it took him a long time to enter the local labour market, as he recalled. Throughout the year 2000, Fathi worked as a day labourer on different construction sites and in the agricultural sector, most of the time in the region around Catania.[56] He did not remember how much he earned at that time, *"All I know is that I was paid in Lira these days"*, he explained. But it was enough to make some small savings.

During our repeated conversations it was impossible to clarify the details and exact timing of his first return. He decided not to share these details with me. All I was able to know is that eventually Fathi went back to Jebiniana the year after. The return was eagerly awaited from the family:

[56] *Bracciante* is the common Italian term for day labourers in the agricultural industry. Fathi used the same tern.

"My father was very happy that I brought back some money. And I was very proud! But after my return, I realised that it was not easy in Jebiniana neither. And all in all, I was more or less at the same point than before."

Upon his return, Fathi began to work on his uncle's fishing boat. It allowed him to generate a modest income, although it was unstable. Due to this precarious economic situation, he continued to live in the father's house with the other brothers and sisters. The whole family, Fathi's paternal grandparents included, was living on the incomes of Fathi's father who worked as a fisherman too. In addition, there were the revenues of Fathi's own income, and the meagre pensions of the grandparents. In short, it was enough to make a living, but not much more.

Yet Fathi's plans were more ambitious. He dreamed to live in Sfax or Tunis some days. This was impossible not only because of the higher living costs in the city, but also because he would have been cut off from the income of the extended family economy. In addition, Fathi admitted that he did not have any closer relatives living in Sfax or even Tunis who would have been able to support him for a first period. Therefore he concluded:

"I did not have a choice. I was somewhat stuck in Jebiniana. To be precise, we do not even live in Jebiniana, but quite far away at the sea. My only possibility was to continue living and

working here, and to hope for a better future. This is not much, you see?"

Three years later, Fathi made another attempt to find a job in Italy. The procedure was quite the same as when he left Tunisia for the first time. As he told me, he knew most of the other *harragas* on the boat. It was a group of around 25 young Tunisians. This time, Fathi decided to try his luck elsewhere than in Sicily. He travelled northward to Parma straight away, where a distant cousin was living for years already. Before the departure, Fathi was already in contact with him and the cousin promised him a job in the same company.

But the start in Parma turned out to be tough. The company where his cousin was working did not have any job vacancies at that moment. Therefore, Fathi tried to find work on construction sites. But it turned out that it was a difficult endeavour due to the lack of contacts to persons working in this specific industry – at least in the beginning. According to Fathi, there were virtually no Tunisians working on construction sites around Parma. All of his compatriots were working in the logistics, and at that time there was simply no need for additional workers in this industry. With his cousin, he shared a small one-piece apartment. In the first weeks, Fathi's cousin also provided him with some money. It took Fathi more than two month to find a job for more than just a few days. His cousin heard the rumour that the company was possibly hiring labourers in another division. He organised the contact to the shift leader who was himself a

Tunisian. Eventually, the shift leader agreed to hire him, although he did not want to give Fathi a proper contract and hire him only on a daily basis.

> *"I've never worked in a real company. It was completely new to me. I had to load and unload the lorries. It was a hard work, and you never have time to relax for a minute. You run the whole day. But it was ok. In my shift, there were three other Tunisian. All of us were working there without any labour contract. The only exception was the shift leader, who had a proper contract. But as the shift leader was a fellow citizen, I trusted him. We were paid at the end of the week and per hour."*

Fathi continued to live in his cousin's apartment. His salary did not allow him to rent his own. Despite these economic constraints, he considered that time as a successful period of his migration trajectory in retrospective. He had a regular income and there were only few days a month when he showed up at the factory gate and there was no job for him. He stayed in Parma for more than two years until 2006.

From time to time, he sent some money back to his family. In the meantime, his younger brother enrolled for a technical college in Sfax. Therefore, the money Fathi sent to the family was highly welcomed and badly needed.

Fathi's cousin was in possession of a so-called *permesso IVA.* This is a residence permit for independent workers.[57] A year after his arrival in Parma in 2005, Fathi tried to obtain the same residence permit too: *"I thought that this would give me some security and freedom. But it eventually turned out that it was impossible to get a permesso in Parma at that time"*, he explained. Despite the lack of a regular residence status or a work permit, he remembered that in case of a police control, it was sufficient to show his Tunisian passport and no further questions were asked by the authorities at that time.

This light-hearted time in retrospect came to an abrupt end towards the end of 2006, when Fathi lost his job. The shift leader who hired him quitted his job and the company had to save costs and reduced its workforce. Fathi's group was dissolved and he and his colleagues lost their jobs.

> *"I knew immediately that this was a moment where I had to take a difficult decision. I knew that it would become harder to find a job. Many of my fellow citizens had already left Parma at that time. Some of them travelled northwards towards Germany. But to be honest, I didn't have the slightest wish to continue the journey northwards with very insecure perspectives. Therefore, I decided to return for the second time."*

[57] With respect to the residence permit for independent workers in Italy, see also Tuckett (2015).

Once again, Fathi considered it as a very good choice in retrospective. Upon his arrival in his hometown and on short notice, he found a job in a company that distributed fertilizers in the region of Sfax. He assumed that it would have been much more complicated to find a job two years later in 2008, when the economic crisis hit Italy with full force and many more Tunisians from the region who were working in Italy lost their jobs and came back. In addition to this job, Fathi continued to work on his uncle's fishing boat on an occasional basis.

Things changed again in early 2011. During the Tunisian uprising in 2010/2011 Fathi lost his job again. The company went bankrupt, salaries remained unpaid. His former boss would still owe him one monthly salary, as Fathi used to highlight every time we met and our conversation revolved around the protests in late 2010 and early 2011. Nonetheless, he remembered these days of turmoil during the uprising with excitement:

> *"But don't forget, it was an exciting time! All the sudden, the subtle pressure and surveillance you previously felt all the time was gone away. And around Jebiniana there were so many departures of boats towards Italy. In the night, you could see the small lights on the sea. All these lights were harraga boats! And many fishermen sold their boat to make some money. My idea was to try it once again."*

Eventually, he left Jebiniana again in the late summer 2011. Fathi travelled more or less straight away to Parma, where his cousin was still living. However,

compared to his former stay in Parma, Fathi was confronted with a very different economic situation and found work only occasionally and on a daily basis. This made his situation much more precarious, as he explained. It was virtually impossible for him to save any money, and he remembered the subtle pressures from his family who asked him time and again when they could expect the next transfer of money. Nonetheless, he decided to remain in Parma for the moment. Sometimes he received some money from his cousin:

> *"Often I met with other Tunisians in Parma who faced the same difficulties. There were a lot of rumours. Some claimed that it would be much easier in France to find any work. But I was not convinced and remained in Parma."*

In summer 2012 – almost a year later – a new rumour spread in the community of undocumented Tunisians in Parma. Some had heard that Switzerland distributed money among Tunisians who would accept a return to their country of origin. Together with two friends, Fathi decided to give it a try. He had never applied for asylum in Italy, and the Italian authorities had never registered him. Therefore, the risk was predictable. He applied for asylum in Chiasso, Switzerland's border town to Italy. Shortly afterwards, he was transferred to Altstätten, where he stayed for a couple of months. Already at his first interview with an official in Chiasso, he declared his intention to return, as Fathi told me. However, it turned out that it was not so easy to access the program as the rumours told. Fathi had imagined he would receive the money immediately and

in cash upon his return. This was at least the way how the programme for assisted return was presented in the rumours among the community of Tunisian *harragas* in Parma. However, from the return migration counsellor Fathi learnt that he would receive only a small amount in cash at the airport. In order to obtain the full amount, he would have to apply for a return project:

> *"For me, the major problem was that they did not distribute money. It is very complicated, and I had to figure out how to solve this problem. The solution was a community project with my uncle and a neighbour."*

Community projects were joint projects that included the return migrant as the applicant and further community members. Fathi's plan was to buy his uncle's fishing boat. This would allow him to keep the money to a great extent in the extended family, despite the official rule that return assistance is not granted in cash. He eventually returned to Tunisia towards the end of 2013, yet it took him another half a year until he was able to buy the boat.

He experienced these extended periods of waiting as rather frustrating: There was much paperwork to do in order to get the project approved. And some of the papers – in particular the *certificat professional* and a certificate for the vessel approval – were only available against payment of bribe, as Fathi disclosed to me once. In short, the long waiting periods were not only frustrating, but characterised by uncertainty and significant pre-investments without a guarantee

that it will ever pay off. For these pre-investments, Fathi borrowed some money from his cousin in Parma, who in turn expected a quick repayment.

Considered as a whole, the story of Fathi shows that the *harraga* is a mundane practice of mobility and not a one-time and life-changing decision. He took the decision to escape the country rather light-hearted and without weighing all the advantages and disadvantages. In the same vein, the decision to return back to Jebiniana was a very pragmatic deliberation. Certainly, as a fisherman his situation was particular. He was used to go to sea. Therefore, being on board of a fishing boat was not a new experience for him. It is a scenery and a socio-economic milieu he knew very well. More broadly speaking, it was no coincidence that the region around Jebiniana was notorious for its high number of departures during the 2010/2011 uprising. Pre-existing networks, the expertise of going to sea, and the material resources in the form of fishing boats no longer in use made the costs of organising one's *harraga* predictable. Being himself part of this socio-economic environment, Fathi knew the relevant persons who ran the *harraga* business.

Fathi's migration biography shows that the *harraga* was only one option among others to improve his precarious economic situation. As a fisherman employed on a daily basis, he was not able to generate a sufficient and stable income in the long run. Therefore, he sought to improve his economic situation in different ways. Working in a different industry than the fishery was one strategy; think of his time in the company that sold and distributed fertilizer in the region. Viewed

in this context, the *harraga* was just a further option. Fathi's deliberation was simple. With regard to the expected expenditures of his *harraga* venture, he expected a favourable return-on-investment to employ an economistic language. He had clear expectations about a potential future as a temporal labour migrant in Europe. In order to meet his socio-economic aspirations of building a house, marrying, and raising a family, he first needed a sufficient economic basis. And this economic basis was neither provided by his meagre income as an employed fisherman on his uncle's boat, nor was there a serious chance for a secure job in another industry or in the local administration. Without personal connections into the local administration and without being a RCD party member, it was virtually impossible to get a position there.[58]

There is further important aspect that makes his *harraga* a rather mundane practice of mobility. The small-scale fishing industry had been in decline for many years. This meant that unused vessels were abundantly available – as well as boat owners, more than willing to sell their vessels for good money in order to cease their economic activity that did not generate enough revenues for a long time (see Mabrouk 2010): The generation of Fathi's father and uncle retired and gradually abandoned the fishing industry, while the younger generation was

[58] See also Hibou (2006) on this aspect.

reluctant to take the business over, as they were well aware of the dire prospects of this industry.

Even though he was used to going to sea, Fathi was talking about the *harraga* experience in terms of an adventure, when describing the crossing of the Mediterranean. Despite his routine and his extensive knowledge and experience as a seafarer, the *harraga* remained something exceptional. He framed his crossing of the Mediterranean almost in the language and symbols of a "rite de passage" (van Gennep 2005): The temporary escape from ordinary life in the form of the *harraga* led towards new adventures yet unknown. The rigid socio-economic structures of Tunisian society did not offer him the prospective of (upward) social mobility and the *harraga* was the attempted escape. However, Fathi did not break with his past, but maintained close contact with his family, friends, and relatives. Furthermore, he always felt a strong commitment to contribute to the family income – in particular supporting his brother who was studying in Sfax. Eventually, Fathi's *harraga* was much less a genuine escape than imagined in the first place, and his socio-economic aspirations clearly did not fulfil – even if he was now the proud owner of a refurbished fishing boat with a brand-new engine.

Second Vignette: "I Decided to Join Some of My Friends and Continue with Them"

Amine was living on a small farm with his parents, not far from the sea. It was easy to miss the small road leading to his house. It was one of the innumerable dusty paths leading away from the recently paved main road connecting the village of el-Amra to the sea. The path led to a field with three greenhouses. Here, Amine was growing green and red peppers, as well as zucchini for the local market. The plot was approximately 50 meters long and 30 meters wide. On the plot, three brand new greenhouses built with sturdy metal arches, covered by transparent plastic sheets. In contrast to the many other greenhouses you could discover from the main road when travelling through the region, the plastic sheets of Amine's greenhouses were in perfect condition. Today, Amine uncovered the sides, as the weather was fine and there was no need to protect the plants from the cold, although it was already in the early autumn. The ground was covered with a labyrinth of small black tubes; the irrigation system for the dry season as he would explain to me later. Proud of his greenhouses, Amine explained every detail of the irrigation system and how it helped increasing the harvest. Walking through his fields, he explained to me:

> *"Whenever possible, I prefer to grow peppers. You can sell them at a higher price on the local markets than zucchini or eggplants. But it is also riskier. Sometimes, the peppers do not grow well, and then you lose almost half of the harvest. Throughout a year, I can harvest three, maybe four times…*

And when one harvest fails, then it becomes really, really tough…"[59]

The three greenhouses are the result of Amine's migration trajectory between Tunisia, Italy, and Switzerland.

He narrated his journey as follows: When Amine decided to leave Tunisia in April 2011, he did not plan anything much in advance. It was rather by chance that he joined a group of other *harragas* from the region. From the group he eventually joined, he knew one guy from school. According to Amine, the group organised the transit to Lampedusa more or less on their own.[60] The boat was bought from a fisherman through an intermediary who was paid for this service by the group. Amine joined the group at the last minute. He took over the place from another person, who was unable to leave with the others – for a reason Amine was not able or willing to tell me. Anyway, he remained vague and imprecise with some details on the organisation and departure of this crossing. This is a pity, as it is highly unusual that a group of *harragas* organise their crossing on their own and I would have liked to know more about it.

When the group set sail towards Lampedusa, it was the high time of Tunisian *harraga* in the aftermath of the uprising against the authoritarian Ben Ali regime.

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[59] All direct quotes I use in this part are from a formal interview I conducted with him in September 2014.

[60] This is rather untypical and I was not able to verify this information; so the circumstance of his departure rely solely on Amine's own narration.

Each night, several boats took off somewhere from the coast north of Sousse. The coast guard or the usual police controls in the hinterland were virtually absent. As a local told me once, it was a time where you could spot several tiny lights dancing on the water each night; the lights from the departing *harraga* boats. Apparently, there was no need to hide their departure.

After Amine's arrival on Lampedusa, he was immediately transferred to a reception centre on Sicily, together with the other members of the group. He described this moment as follows:

> *"We remained only for two nights in the centre. It was overcrowded and everybody had some plans how to continue. After the crossing of the Mediterranean and realising that you reached Europe, it was a feeling of great excitement. Imagine, you really made it to Europe! I mean… you dream for years of leaving Tunisia, and then… one day… it becomes true. In this mood, you don't care any longer about a reception centre somewhere in the hinterland of Sicily. Then you just want to move on: Rome, Milan, maybe Paris. But in contrast to most of the others, I did not have any pre-established contacts, neither in Italy nor in France. Look, I just have no family members who are living abroad. This makes it tough. Therefore, I decided to join some of my friends with whom I made the crossing."*

The group travelled northwards, most of the time by train or in buses, as Amine disclosed. Their initial plan was to go to France via Ventimiglia. But at that time, the French border was closed, and it was not easy to find a way to circumvent the border control at the French-Italian border. After a couple of days at the French border and some unsuccessful attempts to cross it – Amine remained rather superficial with regard to this period in his accounts – he travelled to Milan with two other Tunisians. They have heard of an abandoned factory in the outskirts of the city and decided to try their luck there:

> *"Thanks God it was summer! The factory was nothing more than a humble shelter; a roof that protects you from the rain, and that's it. It was really in the no man's land somewhere on the outskirts of Milan. I was depressed, and I did not really have an idea how to move on. Overall, it was a desperate situation: I thought that I could find a job somewhere. But without any connection; no way… You really get mad, when you are thinking the whole day how to get a job, or how to move on."*

This experience pushed Amine to rethink his plans. He did not have an idea how to continue his journey and even began to think about a possible return. However, without any money put aside, it was impossible to plan the next move. Finally, he got to know another Tunisian who owned a small phone shop in Milan. The guy had been living in Milan for years. It was one of the meeting

points of clandestine Tunisian migrants in Milan to exchange information or simply calling the family back home, reassuring them that everything was going well. In Amine's explanations, the phone shop owner appeared to be a kind of a broker for clandestine Tunisian migrants in Milan. He brought Amine into contact with the owner of a small transport company – another fellow citizen – and Amine was hired on a daily basis to load and unload trucks. He earned a couple of Euros a day, enough to cover the daily expenses, but not enough to save anything for the future; no matter if the next move would be a return back home or a step forward in his migration trajectory within Europe. He was never talking much about his work with me. He only mentioned a few incidents. But these stories were enough to give the impression of a job with high risks and little protection:

> *"Well, it was not the police I feared the most because I did not have any work permit, when I did this job. It was simply dangerous work… Once we were dismantling an old metal roof with corrugated sheet iron. I climbed on the construction in order to remove the screws. It was maybe three to four meters above the ground, and I was not secured at all. Suddenly, I slipped, and it was pure luck that I did not fall down. But I was injured at my left arm where I suffered a deep cut. This injury kept me away from work for at least three weeks. Look… [and he rolled up his sleeve to show me his bare arm; D.L.] Here, you can still see the scar."*

This incident made Amine think about his future more than ever before. He did not want to continue the same job for a long time. And he became aware that the prospective of getting a better job in Italy were not good either. In addition, Amine explained that the situation in the occupied factory began to deteriorate with the arrival of another group of clandestine Tunisians. Tensions between several inhabitants of the factory rose and one evening, Amine himself was involved in a brawl. An always calm, rather timid, and slender young man in his early twenties; I could barely imagine him as an aggressor. He himself was appalled by the general rather hostile atmosphere and decided to move on. Again, it was the phone shop owner who helped him:

> *"He [the phone shop owner] explained me how to get to Chiasso by train, and he gave me the address of his friend who lives nearby. I thought it was worth a try. But the first attempt failed. I was caught by the Swiss border guard in the train and sent back immediately. I tried it a second time in the same night with the same outcome. Maybe, I was just a bit too naïve. After this experience, I decided to return to the factory for a moment, despite all the problems."*

A couple of weeks later, Amine risked a further attempt to cross the border and reach Switzerland. His account of the exact circumstances remained vague. Eventually, he succeeded and immediately applied for asylum in Switzerland once he reached the reception centre in Chiasso. He also called the contact he

had received from the Tunisian phone shop keeper, yet it turned out that this was a dead end. While Amine preferred to stay in Switzerland, the contact urged him to continue his journey to Germany straight away.

Now more or less on his own, Amine contacted several of his colleagues with whom he escaped from Tunisia as *harragas* via Facebook. And from time to time, he called his family in Tunisia to reassure them. These were the only remaining contacts for him in this situation.

> *"When they [my family, D.L.] heard about my situation, especially my mother urged me to return back home. At the same time, I knew that my family expected that I send them money back home. Not an easy situation, as you can see…"*

A month after having submitted his asylum application, Amine still had not received any news regarding his pending application. However, he was realistic enough and his expectations were low, as he knew that there was virtually no chance for a positive decision for Tunisian asylum seekers in Switzerland. In the asylum application, he argued that his father was an RCD party member and therefore feared the prosecution of the police now, though he was very well aware that this reason would not qualify him for asylum in Switzerland. "Look, my only intention was to have some rest for a couple of weeks, and to think about my future", he explained to me. Without an established pre-existing network in Europe, it was difficult to continue in any ways. He felt isolated and lacked the

necessary economic resources, as well as the social capital to successfully continue his migration trajectory.

When he heard about the return migration programme for Tunisian asylum seekers a bit later at an information event in the reception centre, he made his mind immediately; a return home as soon as possible, and with the aid provided by the AVR programme he imagined starting a business as a vegetable grower. For this plan, he could rely on his father's land, and with the AVR assistance, he would be able to buy some greenhouses and an irrigation system to increase the productivity.

However, becoming a vegetable grower was not exactly what he imagined when he left Tunisia a couple of months earlier. To the contrary, "for me it was even a reason to leave Tunisia. To be honest, I did not want to end as a farmer as my father did. But it is ok now," he explained to me. The way he explained his decision to return back home expressed the pragmatic nature of his choice: The realisation of a return migration project was a way to avoid returning home with empty hands, as he was not able to save some money during his stay in Italy and Switzerland.

Amine did not disclose many details about his return. To a large extend, it remained a black box for me. Here and there he mentioned some episodes and complained how lengthy the realisation of the return migration project was. But these were rather scarce and hidden remarks. He also did not want to talk

extensively on the relationship with the return migration bureaucrats, although I once asked him openly regarding this topic, as I gained the impression of a rather complicated relationship with a lot of mistrust from both sides.[61]

In contrast to these often vague remarks on his trajectory between Tunisia, Italy, and Switzerland, he talked extensively what returning back home to his father's land meant to him. On the one hand, he considered his return as a failure. He ended as a farmer like his father (to use Amine's own words); something he wanted to avoid at any price when he escaped Tunisia in 2011. On the other hand, he never planned to stay abroad for a very long time. As a rather spontaneous decision and the fact that he just seized the moment, his migration trajectory is arguably prototypical for the kind of transnational mobility of young male Tunisians at that time. The fall of the Ben Ali regime was a unique chance to try one's luck abroad. The way Amine was reflecting his own migration trajectory supports such an interpretation. Especially with respect to his time in Italy, Amine referred to it as if it was an adventure where he tried to build a future with a lot of imagined possibilities, yet few real options. At the same time, it is striking to see how his memories of the time in Italy differed from the time in Switzerland. Caught in Switzerland's asylum bureaucracy and with no real change to escape it, he complained many times during our different

[61] I also interviewed the local return migration official responsible for Amine's project. The impression I got was that he did not really trusted him, although it remained my gut feeling, and I was unable to substantiate my vague impression with any direct observations.

conversations that “there were just so many rules and restrictions imposed upon me.” As a consequence, the topic of freedom – or rather the lack thereof – was some kind of a leitmotiv when he described the asylum procedure and the assisted voluntary return.

Third Vignette: "With 3'000 Dinars, I'm Off… to Europe"

I first met Yassine (24) when I went to a café one evening in my neighbourhood to watch a football match.[62] Barcelona was playing the AC Milan in the group stage of the Champions League. I went there on my own, sat down on a shaky white plastic chair, and ordered a mint tea and a Shisha. Yassine was one of several waiters in the cafe. He took my order and returned a couple of minutes later with the tea and the Shisha. There were only few other customers in the café, and he had not much work to do. So, he grabbed a chair and sat down near me and started to talk. Tired from an exhausting day, I was not in the mood to engage in a proper conversation and remained short in my answers. But he insisted and there were no other customers who would have saved me with their orders from a lengthy conversation. I realised that I would have no other choice than joining in. We first exchanged some observations about the match and the performance of one of Barcelona's midfielders who was especially bad this day. Our conversation meandered here and there – until all the sudden and rather unexpected for me, Yassine changed the topic and started to talk about his work as a waiter. He told me how much he hated this low paid job, but that it was also almost impossible for find another job in Tunis. "With 3'000 Dinars, I'm off… to Europe," he concluded. I was taken by surprise by this unexpected statement, but it caught my attention and I asked him if he would agree to tell

[62] The first meeting with Yassine dates back to November 2013. From that moment, we met regularly until my departure in May 2014. When I returned back to Tunisia in September 2014, I met Yassine again for a final interview.

me more about his biography. In the following weeks, I paid several visits in the café and we met several times; sometimes just to hang out, but very often, our conversations revolved around his dreams to leave Tunisia.

Yassine was born in Sbeitla, a small town near Kasserine; the town that became one of the hotspots of the protests against Ben Ali in the first phase of the uprising in the last days of the year 2010. His father possessed a tiny plot of land, where the family raised cattle and grew vegetables. In order to improve the family income, Yassine's father worked on a daily basis as an unskilled worker on different road construction sites in the *gouvernorat* Kasserine. Yassine had two sisters and two brothers. After graduating from the *lycée* in Sbeitla, Yassine was 19 years old and decided to move to Tunis, where his elder sister was already enrolled in the faculty of medicine.[63] She lived with her aunt who moved to the capital several years ago. Yassine joined them and lived with them in the same house in the run-down neighbourhood of Jebel al-Ahmar (the Red Hill) not far away from the city centre. He explained how his sister was able to go to university as follows:

> *"In contrast to my sister, I didn't join the university. Well, you know, she is so smart; always on top of her class. Therefore, she was able to study… In contrast to her, I didn't receive a bourse*

[63] Even today, it is quite exceptional that a woman with a working-class background, in addition from the rural parts of Tunisia, studies medicine.

d'étude (scholarship). But even with a bourse, it is not easy. A bourse is about 800 Dinar… per year! Therefore, I decided to look for a job rather than studying at the university."

In the first time, Yassine gave his uncle a hand, who worked as a subcontractor for a recycling company and collected scrap metal in the neighbourhood. But he considered this occupation "not really a job. I did not earn anything." Rather it was a compensation for the accommodation he was given by his aunt's family. During his free time, he was hanging around in the cafés in the neighbourhood.

"Well, I sometimes spent the whole morning in the café… just one glass of tea and maybe two cigarettes. This was my strategy to survive. Sometimes, one of the chibanis gave me another cigarette.[64] But I didn't have the means to spend more money… You know, from time to time, there was the possibility to get a job for a couple of days. Then I helped on a construction site, hauling cement bags and bricks for example. I knew that the bosses were looking here for labourers. Therefore, I was quite early in the café."

But the income remained meagre. The wages from this casual labour did not make a living. Yassine once mentioned the sum of 10 to 15 Tunisian Dinars per day. His situation was precarious, not only because of the poorly paid job. It was

[64] *Chibanis* is a colloquial and slightly pejorative term for older, retired men.

also unpredictable whether there would be any work at all the next day – and therefore also any income. In short, this was Yassine's situation before the 2010/2011 uprising. However, after the crumbling of the Ben Ali regime and the looming economic crisis, it became even harder to find a jobs, as he admitted.

> *"For the first time, I was thinking about the harraga at that time. It was my cousin who proposed it to me first.*[65] *He told me that his brother was living in Northern Italy and he would help us. But I didn't have enough money. 3'000 Dinars… at least… was required. It was a time when many others from the neighbourhood tried the harraga. I kept contact to some of them through Facebook."*

While he knew of a couple of friends and acquaintances who had left the neighbourhood and tried their luck, Yassine decided to stay in Jebel al-Ahmar for the moment and the *harraga* remained a dream. It was in the beginning of 2012 when he finally found a more or less stable job in a café in La Marsa. Although La Marsa is the posh suburb where Tunis's upper middle class and large parts of the international expat community is living, his café was a rather modest place, not far from the terminal station of the so-called TGM, the

[65] It was not entirely clear, whether he referred to a cousin in the proper sense of the term, i.e. a son of the siblings of his father or mother. Often, the term cousin is used to designate further rather distant relative of the same age group.

suburban railway that links La Marsa to Tunis through La Goulette. He summarised his situation as follows:

> *"Look, the situation is better now, but still it is not quite what I have been looking for… You have to know, I now earn 20 Dinars a day. My shift begins at noon and ends in the evening around ten. When there is a football match on TV, the evening shift ends even later, as you know… And 20 Dinars for a whole day of work… It's definitively not that much."*

All in all, Yassine was usually working around fifteen days a month, for which he earned between 200 and 300 Tunisian Dinars in total. When there was some money left at the end of the month, he sent part of it to his father and saved the rest for himself. "I save for the harraga!" he laughed, and it was not clear whether it was a joke or not. Probably, it was both. In addition to his job in the café, he sometimes gave a hand at the Bouselsa market where a friend of him was working at a so-called *fripe* stand, selling second hand clothes. Another statements shows how he continued to think about an escape from Tunisia:

> *"You know, the harraga is always in my mind. Give me 2'000, 3'000 Dinars … and I'm off! What can I do here in Tunisia? Yes I know… I have a job. I have my friends here… But I do not only want to make a decent living abroad. This is not the only point. I don't want to stay my entire life here in this damn café, preparing shishas and mint tea all day long. I want to*

travel, to see the European cities, to meet my friends who are over there. This is just an ordinary desire, isn't it? But the first step is to rent a room on my own."

However, for Yassine the *harraga* did not remain a pure imagination of a better future. In spring 2013, he finally made a half-hearted and ill-prepared attempt with three other friends of the neighbourhood. They made an advance payment to someone who was presented to them as a facilitator. But the promised contact in the region of Nabeul was a dead end. So, they decided to try it on their own, as they feared losing the advance payment, yet they made it only to Grombalia, where the national guard took them up, as Yassine recalled.

His experience overlaps with the general security situation in 2013 that changed entirely compared to the months after the fall of the Ben Ali regime. In 2013 the security apparatus was already fully operational again, and it was too late for attempts to leave the country clandestinely by boat – at least in the northern parts of Tunisia and without the help of facilitators. Yassine spent a couple of days in prison, before he was released. After this half-hearted attempt, Yassine returned to his job in the cafe. "I didn't have the courage to tell my boss that I tried the *harraga*", he explained. "He wouldn't be very happy to hear about it." Yassine continued his ordinary life between his job in La Marsa and his aunt's house. He supported his family with his small income, especially his sister who was studying medicine.

He made a second attempt of escaping Tunisia a few months later. In October 2013, Yassine applied for a visa in France. But again, the whole endeavour was ill-prepared. Yassine's idea was to apply for a study visa in France. "I thought about business administration or so", he explained. After he showed up at the embassy for the first time, he became aware that there was virtually no possibility of obtaining a visa for France for young men like him:

> *"You have to imagine… In order to apply for a visa, you have to fulfil so many criteria. Without a guaranteed place at a university – just forget it. Then you have to proof that you'll have enough money to make a living in France – just impossible for me… But my point is anyway not to study in France. My motivation is just to leave Tunisia. I don't know if you can imagine… but I live in the same house with my aunt and her husband. My sister lives there too. I am fed up with all this family stuff. You can't breathe."*

After this second "half-attempt" of leaving Tunisia, Yassine abandoned his concrete migration plans at all. At least for the moment, he did not see any way to change his situation. He admitted that he was always thinking about the *harraga* but did not undertake further concrete steps to realise it.

In our discussions, Yassine often compared his life trajectory with his boss's biography: In the 1960ies, at the age of 17, he emigrated to France in order to work in the construction sector in the suburbs of Lyon. He spent almost ten

years in France, as he explained when the three of us met once. When he lost his job in the end of the 70ies, he decided to return to Tunisia. With the savings he made from his job in France, it was possible to buy a house and open the café where Yassine was working now. In contrast to his boss who had the possibility of working abroad for a certain time in Europe even as an unskilled labourer in the 1960s, Yassine's own generation does no longer have this opportunity, as he explained:

> *"Show me one single young man of my age who is able to save any money; it is impossible here in Tunisia! Either you come from an important family, or you make your money abroad. And this is no longer possible. But I swear you, I won't give up. And I will make it to Europe one day!"*

In Yassine's biography, the *harraga* is much more imagination than real practice. Stuck between low paid and unstable jobs on the one hand, and with no prospects for a better future on the other hand, the *harraga* becomes a vanishing point that bundles wishes, imaginations, and desires. This is further fuelled by his colleagues' experiences abroad, with whom he remained in contact via social media on a regular basis. Migration is not a distant phantasy, but a concrete practice in Yassine's social environment, despite the fact that in his close and extended family, there is no one with any experience of transnational mobility and labour migration. This lack of a transnational social networks is probably

one of the major reasons that Yassine's *harraga* attempts appear as half-hearted to outsiders. He acted naïvely and got cheated repeatedly.

As a substitute, Yassine cultivated the *harraga* as an imagination with his friends and colleagues. When they met in the cafés, they often used to exchange stories of acquaintances who were living in Italy, France, or Germany. In particular through these colleagues, Yassine remained connected to this transnational social space of *harragas* to a certain extend. In this context, the term social space emphasises the loose connection between the individual *harragas*. Many of them do not know each other personally, but only via some other friends. It is the sharing of a common idea that connects the different individuals, rather than direct and personal interactions.

Fourth Vignette: "I Tried the Harraga at Least Twenty Times"

Like his father, Kaïs was working as an unskilled day labourer for truck drivers, who distributed hay among the farmers in the whole North of Tunisia. It was a hard and physical work. You work from dusk till dawn, and it depended on the orders whether you are hired for the next day or not. Most of the time, Kaïs was working together with his friend. Both went to school only for a couple of years. His friend was de facto an illiterate. When Kaïs was talking about his work – whether it was with me alone or together with his friend – it was tangible how much he hated his job. "But I have no other choice," he used to say.

Usually, Kaïs and his friend knew only the day before if there was some work for the next day. The usual working day began very early in the morning. Around five o'clock the truck driver picked them up in M'hamdia, a working-class suburb of Tunis. Together with the driver, who was in general the owner of the truck, they would drive to the warehouse, where the hay was stored. They loaded the trucks, before they left and drove around the whole day, in order to sell the hay to the farmers. Sometimes, they loaded the truck in the evening before in order to start their itinerary earlier. The daily wage for these working days that last sometimes more than ten hours was as meagre as 5 Dinar.

In his narratives, Kaïs often linked the descriptions of his daily work with descriptions how he tried to escape Tunisia since years; always without success:

"I tried the harraga at least twenty times. But I never managed to make it to the boat. Once, I was already on the beach, but then the police discovered us. Each time, you risk a couple of days in prison. But… it is worth a try."

M'hamdia, where Kaïs was living, is close to the capital, but nonetheless a world on its own – especially for the youth. Unemployment rates were high among the younger generation; and those who had a job, were usually working in the informal labour market. This signified unstable jobs, a low income, and no social protection, as Kaïs's biography exemplarily illustrates: He went to school until the age of 14, before he began to work on the hay trucks. He had never a formal labour contract. Rather he would have to look for work every day at a specific place in the town where the hay trucks were passing by and the drivers were looking for labourers to hire them for this day. All in all, Kaïs was living a precarious live at the edge of society.

The days without work were long and never-ending. Then, he used to meet with friends in the café, where they drank coffee and smoked cigarettes. To forget these days of inactivity, sometimes he would gather with his friends in the evening a bit outside of M'hamdia towards the ruins of the palace of the former ruler Ahmed I. On this hill with a perfect view over M'hamdia and Tunis, they would gather for drinking beer, laughing and joking, and listening to music. It was virtually the only place, where Kaïs felt unobserved; both from the state authorities and the (extended) family. When Kaïs was talking about the *harraga,*

it appeared as an imagined escape from this control and surveillance by the state and the family. As expressed in the quote above, he claimed having tried the *harraga* "more than twenty times." It was a permanent topic in his conversations with me and with his friends alike.

However, in contrast to Yassine, Kaïs's numerous attempts to leave the country were more serious, and he tried it again and again over a long period. One of the first serious attempts was in 2008, as Kaïs remembered. He made it until Sfax, where he was stopped at a check point by the police. The checkpoints were omnipresent on the main roads between the major cities. At that time, this explicit display of state authority in the public was the immediate response to the 2007 incident, when a shoot-out occurred between security forces and alleged terrorists. It was then also common practice to intercept and return ordinary travellers as well, though there was no legal basis for this practice for police and national guard. In particular young males traveling in groups attracted the attention of the security forces for the two reasons as potential "terrorists" and potential *harragas* alike. Kaïs remembered how he was stopped at one of these check points and forced to return to M'hamdia. However, he was rather lucky, as he was neither arrested nor sentenced.

Another incident happened a bit later, as Kaïs told me. His group was intercepted when they were already on the road to the beach in order to embark on a fishing boat. This time, he had less luck. He was arrested and imprisoned for fifteen days.

As much as Kaïs mentioned these and other incidents, he remained rather vague in his descriptions. On the one hand, I had the impression that it was important to him to testify these incidents. It was his way to tell *his* truth to the world. At the same time, he also felt embarrassed to talk about it, as every single attempt was a failure.

As I learnt only later, his reluctance to talk more extensively about these incidents was probably also linked to the fact that he owed money to his cousin; money he borrowed from him in order to make advance payments to a facilitator for the organisation of the *harraga.* When I came to know Kaïs, he was thus in a delicate situation. He was indebted and his cousin urged him to pay back the borrowed amount of money in the near future. At the same time, he was very well aware that with his job as a day labourer on the hay truck, he would never be able to pay back the debt in the foreseeable future. He was very realistic that the *harraga* would remain and imagined project, yet he stuck firmly to the idea that one day or another he will "escape all that shit", as he used to expresses it.

In contrast to other cases – for example the fisherman Fathi we encountered in the first vignette – Kaïs did not see the *harraga* as an adventure, rather it was a mix between the expectation to improve his economic condition and simply to escape the weight of the double control from state and family. The gatherings on the hill overlooking M'hamdia can be read as a substitute for the "real escape" in the form of the *harraga;* gathering with friends and drinking alcohol away

from the eyes of state and family was thus an explicit and conscious breach of social norms.

An interesting detail in Kaïs's migration biography are his encounters with state authorities in the form of border guards and the police.[66] He was stopped at checkpoints and he spent time in Tunisian prisons without even having crossed the border. His biography thus shows how the European border regime is externalised and how Tunisian legislation – through the law that prohibits the "illegal departure" as it stipulates – and state authorities who monitor and control the access to the notorious points of departure along the Tunisian shores.

[66] As Kaïs was relating himself so much to the community of *harragas,* I suggest considering his biography also as a migration biography, although it consists of failed attempts and imagined escapes only.

Fifth Vignette: "Forget It, I Will Never Go Back"

With the next vignette of Foued's migration trajectory, we change sides and travel from Tunisia to Switzerland, where he got stuck. In his narrative, he explained why he refused to return back to Tunisia and why he decided to remain in Switzerland, despite the difficult circumstances.

Foued arrived in Switzerland at a time when the number of Tunisian asylum seekers in Switzerland was at its peak. In April 2011 he applied for asylum and was living in Switzerland since then. Foued told me that he even did not attend the outcome of the asylum procedure after having filed his case. After a couple of weeks in the reception centre in Chiasso, Foued decided to leave the centre and moved to a relative who was living near Biel, a small town close to Switzerland's capital city Bern.[67]

"Forget it, I will never go back!" This was Foued's comment when I first met him and we were talking about his experience with the return assistance programme. Before his time in Switzerland, Foued was living in Italy with a so-called *permesso IVA* for independent labour between 2009 and 2011. This type of residence permit can be granted to persons who are planning to work independently in Italy. It was a well-known migration strategy among Tunisians at that time.[68]

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[67] The reception centres in Switzerland are open and it is possible to leave them without any control.

[68] In her work on an advisory centre in Northern Italy, Tuckett (2015) mentions the *permesso IVA* as a popular migration strategy for North African migrants to obtain a regular status for a certain period. See also the first migration biography of Fathi.

He was not the only informant I met who used this type of residence permit as an entry point to Italy. Depending on the local administration, it was quite easy to obtain this residence permit, as I learnt from numerous stories. It allows to exercise an independent activity, yet for its renewal one has to proof one's economic activity for the previous period. As Foued did not exercise an independent economic activity as the *permesso* would require, but was rather working in the informal labour market, it was impossible for him to renew it.

However, this temporary residence permit gave him a rather secure status in Italy for a certain period of time. *"It was great, I did not have to fear police controls"*, he explained. After his arrival in Italy, Foued first worked as a bricklayer in Sicily. In Mazara del Vallo, he knew a paternal uncle and was living with his family for a couple of months.[69] However, the longer he stayed with his uncle's family, the more he came into conflicts with his uncle, who accused him of being lazy, as he described the rather tense personal situation in Sicily. "This was not true! It was simply impossible to find any work", Foued insisted. Eventually, he decided to leave Sicily and looking for work elsewhere in Italy. With his *permesso*, he was safe to travel around and did not have to fear police controls.

In Foued's own account, the following months remained vague; I never really found out how he made a living during this period. In his story, he always

[69] Mazara del Vallo is known for its high share of Tunisians among its population. Many of them are living in a part of the old town, called la Kasbah. It dates back to the period when Mazara del Vallo was under Arab domination.

jumped directly from his time in Mazara del Vallo to his arrival in Chiasso: In the narrative, almost a year was missing between Mazaro and the arrival in Switzerland. All he told me was that he was working as a street vendor in different Italian cities.

Eventually in April 2011, Foued arrived in Chiasso in order to apply for asylum in Switzerland. When he arrived in Switzerland, he had already the clear intention to later join a distant relative who was living in Biel at that time.[70] This decision was accelerated by the experience of control and surveillance at the reception centre – a new experience he had never made before:

> *"After spending years in Italy without any restrictions, it was hard for me to submit to the strict rules in the reception centre. Confined in a camp and with the strict rules when it is allowed to leave the camp and so on… No, this is nothing for me! Therefore, I decided to abandon the asylum procedure. I yearned for freedom, not to be bothered by some social assistant, or responding to these stupid questions about my life during the asylum interviews."*

Therefore, the decision was made quickly: Foued quit the reception centre and moved to his relative in Biel. In possession of a permanent residence permit, his

[70] Foued himself refers to this person as a cousin. However, from the conversations it does not come out whether it is a cousin in the strict sense of the term, or if he refers with this term to any sort of distant relative in his own generation.

relative was living in a small two-room apartment. He agreed to accommodate Foued for a couple of months. But soon, Foued realised that the situation in Switzerland was not comparable to Italy. Without a residence permit on his own, it was very difficult to find a job in Switzerland.

He remembered how he often thought about returning to Italy during his first months in Biel. However, this was easier said than done:

> *"But you know… I was trapped in Switzerland. Once you are in the asylum [system], then you can no longer go back, because of the fingerprints. So, I had no other choice than to continue in Switzerland."*

This quote refers to the Eurodac database for the identification of asylum seekers in Europe. As long as you are not registered in the database, there is no first country that would be responsible for your asylum application under the Dublin rules.

During the first couple of months, his relative supported him financially. At the same time, Foued started to work on an informal basis and only a couple of hours a week in a small grocery store, owned by a Moroccan he came across in his first weeks in town. However, the revenue from this activity was insufficient to cover the costs of living. Therefore, it was inconceivable to send money back home, as he intended to do.

Foued was one of the few clandestine Tunisian migrants I met during my research who was from the South. He grew up in Zarzis, graduated from school and faced the same situation as so many other young Tunisians: extremely high youth unemployment rates and thus a very difficult situation to find a job. Sometimes, he worked here and there for a couple of days or weeks, but without the prospect of a more or less secure job. With respect to this situation, Foued is another typical case for the group of Tunisian *harragas*. High youth unemployment rates make it impossible to secure one's economic basis and the *harraga* becomes a very rational economic strategy, although it is a risky bet.

However, there is one aspect that makes Foued's migration trajectory unique: He categorically excluded the prospect of a return despite the lack of well-established social ties to other relatives living with a secure residence permit in a European country (except his one relative in Biel). Although he was barely able to make a living with his meagre and unstable income, he was determined to stay in Switzerland. His transnational migration trajectory was therefore more than a mere economic strategy. It rather touched his own identity, as he was absolutely determined to conduct a successful live abroad.

Foued's migration trajectory contained an epilogue. I had barely met him since the second half of 2015. Only recently in April 2016, I all the sudden received a message from an unknown number. „Now in France" it read. I tried to contact the number, but no one answered. After several attempts I gave it up. A few days later Foued called back from this number. He told me that he ran into a police

control in Biel. He was lucky that they released him and did not put him into custody straight forward. But he received an order of punishment for “illegal residence,” as he called it. Foued had the suspicion that he was now on the radar of the police. Due to this incident, he decided to move on. He was anyway considering continuing his migration journey to France, joining two other young Tunisians he knew from Zarzis, he justified his hastily departure on the phone to me. They lived in the suburbs of Paris and Foued staid with them, as he told. Till then, he had not found any work. Here and then, he helped one of the two friends with his deliveries for a logistics company. But these were rather rare occasions. I asked him why he called me at this particular moment. He replied that he was thinking again about returning to Switzerland and he wanted to know my personal opinion concerning the risks of being picked up by the border guards or later by the police. My rather pessimistic assessment did not satisfy him. Since then, I have not heard any news from him and my occasional attempts to reach him never succeeded.

Sixth Vignette: "I Am a Businessman, Just Like Everyone Else…"

The last vignette of these migration biographies takes us back to Abdellah, the intermediary we briefly encountered already in the opening scene of this dissertation. His migration experiences date back to the 1970ies. After spending years abroad on construction sites in France, he returned back to Tunisia. He now lives in the capital's suburb of Jebel Jelloud, where he grew up.

"I am a businessman. Just like everyone else…" Abdellah laughed, and his sonorous voice carried the words over the street. Although he was reluctant to explain in full detail what type of business he exercised, he explained that he was active in the *commerce de valise*, as it is usually called in the Tunisian dialect. This means he imported and exported small quantities of goods between Tunisia and Algeria, not more than one person can carry in his suitcases, hence the name. Declared as goods for personal use at the customs, one does not have to pay taxes. With this activity, he was operating in a legal grey zone. However, the *commerce de valise* is a socially respected economic activity, and not at all considered as smuggling. Therefore, it is a barely hidden activity. Abdellah even used to cross the official border posts between Algeria and Tunisia.

He carefully maintained the image of a successful businessman, although his worn-out suit told a different story. Always pretending to be very busy, he rarely showed up on time at a meeting. During our conversations, his mobile phone rested on the table, ready to answer a phone call or making one at any time.

Abdellah was 21 years old, when he left Tunisia for the first time in order to work on French construction sites. He joined his elder brother who was living in France already for a couple of years. At that period, a lot of young Tunisians left the country looking for work. The vast majority went to France or Italy. It was a time when the economies of these countries were in need of cheap and unskilled labour force, and both countries had quite liberal immigration policies.[71] As he recalled, it was no problem for Abdellah to enter France without a visa. He was even working for extended periods without any working permits, never encountering any problems.

Abdellah described to me the moment when he arrived for the very first time at Marseille's seaport, carrying along with him all his belongings in a small suitcase. His brother picked him up and brought him to Paris. Abdellah's brother was well connected to different employers in the construction industry, and he helped his brother to find a job. Curious why it was so easy to find work even without any residence permit, Abdellah replied:

> *"Papers you ask? No, I can't remember exactly. But what I know for sure; I applied for a residence permit after I started working on my first construction site. I know it, because I went to the administration applying for a residence permit with my*

[71] See also Chapter 4. For a detailed discussion of the changing labour migration regime for Tunisian labour migrants in France, see Anne-Sophie Bruno's instructive book „Les chemins de la mobilité: migrants de Tunisie et marché de travail parisien depuis 1956" (2010).

work contract. And then the public employee who processed my application told me that my employer cheats me and does not pay the minimum wage."

The legalisation of his residence status was an informal and unbureaucratic process, as Abdellah remembered. He received his long-term residence permit without major obstacles. The permit allowed him to change the job more easily. In the following years, he worked for many different employers, always in the construction industry and for most of the time in the wider region of Paris. He continued to live with his elder brother. Very often, they were even working on the same construction sites. Abdellah earned enough money to save "a considerable amount," as he used to say.

Each summer, he returned back to Tunisia for six weeks, paying visits to his family. With the remittances, he supported the family. Later he bought his own small plot of land near to his father's house in order to build his own.

Things changed when Abdellah's residence permit expired. A few months before, he had lost his job. All the sudden, this became a problem for the renewal of his residence permit. Nonetheless, Abdellah decided against a return to Tunisia and continued to live in France for the next couple of years. Despite the lack of any residence permit, he was always able to find a job for a couple of weeks, for most of the time somewhere in the construction industry, as he acquired a broad knowledge over the years. Due to his large network from numerous previous jobs, there was always a colleague who informed him about short-term job

opportunities. However, the typical duration of the average employment had changed, as Abdellah remembered. Before, he had been hired with an ordinary labour contract which gave him some security for the foreseeable future. Now, most of the time he was working without any written contract, and only on the basis of provisional oral agreements. Most of the time, his salary was below the official minimum wage in the construction industry.

Later, Abdellah benefited from a legalisation campaign of the French government, and he was able to secure a residence permit again:

> *"I was happy. It was now possible again going back to Tunisia. When I lost my residence permit, I had to remain in France and was not able to leave the country. This was annoying. I really wanted to go back, but it was simply impossible."*

In the middle of the 1980s, Abdellah decided to return back to Tunisia permanently. The economic situation in France had become increasingly difficult. In addition, he realised that companies began to prefer younger people. In Tunisia, he made enough progress with his project of constructing his own house. It was now possible to move in, although it was not finished yet. "I made enough savings to live a decent life here", he summarised the decision to return permanently.

However, once back in Tunis, soon he realised that it was not that easy to continue as before. Although he had put some money aside, he needed a job.

For a first period, Abdellah lived from his savings and finished the house. Later, he tried to establish his own small construction company –with little success:

> *"I began to help out some relatives renewing their houses. I had some equipment for masonry work. And with the henchmen I hired for my own house, I started to do some masonry for my relatives."*

In the beginning, this plan was quite successful. But with the time, Abdellah realised that the business would not generate enough revenues. All in all, it seemed as if Abdellah never settled down in Tunisia with regard to his socio-economic situation. He was constantly struggling to find an economic activity that corresponded to the life he conducted before in Tunis. With his working-class wages from France, he was able to conduct a middle-class life in Tunis. Without his permanent return, it was a permanent struggle to maintain this middle-class lifestyle without the French wages.

Eventually, Abdellah became a *commerce de valise* trader. With this activity, he just earned enough to make a living. When I asked him if he regretted the decision to return back to Tunisia permanently, he answered:

> *"Not at all. I always preferred the life in Tunisia. Paris was tough: hard work, living in a small apartment, and all that stuff. It drives you mad. Here, I have my own house. I can live in peace."*

In his research on Ghanaian migrants in Germany, Boris Niewsand (2011) describes a similar pattern how a working-class existence in the country of destination enables a middle-class life in the country of origin with the term of the status paradox. In their country of origin, the Ghanaian migrants conduct a middle-class life with all the material insignia representing the successful achievement of upward social mobility. More than this, it is not only a display of a successful and decent middle-class life. In Ghana, they are indeed part of the middle class in term of their socio-economic position. However, this successful achievement of upward social mobility, is inextricably linked to a working-class existence in Germany, as Nieswand describes (2011). Low-paid jobs in sectors with little prestige are the economic basis for a decent middle-class existence in the country of origin. It is the precarious life as a labour migrant at the fringes of society in the Global North that opens the path for upward social mobility in the Global South.

We can observe a similar pattern in the case of Abdellah. In France, he was working on construction sites as an unskilled labourer. He tried to save as much money as possible with his meagre salary, sharing most of the time the apartment with his brother or other fellow citizens he had encountered on the construction sites. Returning back to Jebel Jelloud during the long summer vacations, Abdellah pursued his aspirations of upward social mobility; he bought land and built a house. Once, he even imported a brand-new car from France, as he recalled in one conversation. Therefore, it is more than mere nostalgia or affection for his friends and relatives when he complained that he was inhibited

from returning temporarily to Tunisia at the time he was lacking a residence permit in France and thus unable to leave the country: It was also the middle-class life during the summer he was missing, and which formed part of his identity.

Abdellah's case highlights how complicate it is to secure this upward social mobility in the long run. Working for more than ten years abroad on construction sites in France, it allowed him to have a decent life for a certain period of time once back in Jebel Jelloud, yet he failed to secure this transformation of his social status and make it permanent.

Conclusion: Individual Experiences, General Patterns

The six migration biographies highlight the diversity of individual migration trajectories. They are shaped by individual decisions, as well as by external constraints and opportunities of the border regime. The concluding part of this chapter suggests a transversal reading of the migration biographies in order to compare the individual experiences of transnational mobility, departure, and return. Such a comparison shows that these experiences – as different and individual as they might be – are embedded in a broader logic. This logic is structured by the border regimes and the governance of mobility that produces differentiated mobility. It allows transnational mobility for some and denies it for others. Certain patterns of mobility and certain experiences emerge repeatedly throughout all biographies, suggesting that there are some common elements that are shaped by a structuring force. In this context, two aspects are of particular importance: the fragmentation of time and space, and the appropriation of mobility against the explicit rules of the border regime. Both aspects contribute to the constitution of the transnational mobile subject.

Fragmentation of Space and Time

The first aspect of border regimes as lived experience is the fragmentation of time and space. While the spatial dimension is obvious, the temporal dimension might be more surprising. In the following paragraphs, I argue that the regulation of mobility is always connected to the temporal dimension as well. It

cannot be understood only through an analysis of the administration of space. The aspect of temporality in the context of border regimes has been discussed by Papadopoulos et al. (2008:194ff). They use the figure of the camp as a "decompression chamber".[72] Based on the argument of Mezzadra (2001) who rejects an Agambian reading of the camp as a state of exception (see Agamben 1998), they show that refugee camps are rather a regulative instance to govern mobility than a permanent site of a state of exception.[73]

With respect to deportation and retention practices of the state, Andersson (2014a: 212-214; 2014b) describes the governance of clandestine mobile practices as an active usurpation of time by state authorities. In the cases I am dealing with, this usurpation of time does not emerge in its violent and direct form, as for example detention camps represent. But the lengthy asylum procedure or the extended periods of waiting during the realisation of one's return migration projects, described for example by Fathi or Amine, highlight how the usurpation of time is a ubiquitous effect in the administration of transnational mobility. It is not at all restricted to the most explicit forms of control exercised over the lives and bodies of the asylum seekers. As Hans Lucht (2012: 72) argues from the perspective of an existential anthropology, this aspect

[72] See also Panagiotidis and Tsianos (2007)

[73] In her anthropological research with detainees at a detention centre in the United Kingdom, Griffith explores the aspect of temporality and uncertainty as experience in a situation of constraints (Griffith 2013). She argues that the detention centre is a place of uncertainty, despite its character of a total institution (Goffman 1961). One of the main aspects of this uncertainty is the detainees are no longer in a position to dispose of one's time autonomously.

of forced waiting is a form of state power that is experienced in a very existential way.

However, this immediate form of state intervention in the form of the camp to regulate transnational mobility is not the focus of this dissertation, and it is absent in the migration biographies. Moreover, the programme for assisted voluntary return migration AVR even juxtapose the idea of voluntariness to constraint and confinement as expressed and materialised in the institution of the camp.[74] To put it plainly, even the reception and procession centres do not qualify for camps in the Agambian sense. Fathi, Amine, and Foued did experience these centres as places of surveillance and constraint, yet their biographies also show how easy it was for them to ignore the rules and simply leave the camp.

More important with regard to the administration and fragmentation of time and space is the asylum procedure itself. In particular, the analysis shows how the time of the transnational mobile subjects is a target of administration and eventually fragmentation: Decisions are either delayed or speeded up, depending on the priority list of the asylum bureaucracy. It is a state that can almost be described in terms of liminality (see Turner 1991), marked by the uncertainty about one's own future: One is caught in a limbo, departed but not yet arrived.

[74] See also Chapter Six and Seven.

Temporality as a decisive aspect emerges in each of the six migration biographies, although it is experienced in entirely different ways. Yassine's case for example is very instructive with regard to the aspect that temporality is regulated in a very subtle and indirect way and not experienced in form of direct coercion through state authorities. Trapped in a low-paid job as a waiter in the suburbs of Tunis and without the prospect of any change of this situation, the *harraga* becomes an imagined escape that is postponed into a far future. He simply did not dispose of the necessary means to claim and execute his right to transnational mobility; neither in a way that complies with the explicit rules of the border regime (through a student visa), nor in a way that undermine these rules (through the *harraga).*

The case of Fathi tells a different story of temporality and how this is inscribed in individual migration trajectories. He had been working for a long time in Italy already. But he had the feeling of being stuck in Parma, where he did not manage to get a more or less secure job. Without a residence or working permit, his migration trajectory came to a halt. It was neither possible to continue his journey, nor did he see a possibility to return home. He described the situation in Parma as a waiting for a window of opportunity to continue his journey. All the sudden, this opportunity to do a next step emerged, when the Ben Ali regime crumbled and thousands of young Tunisians decided to try their luck abroad. It brought the European border regime under pressure and it allowed also Fathi to take his migration project a step further.

This leads to the second aspect that runs through all six migration biographies as a leitmotif: the dialectics between the alienation and appropriation of transnational mobility.

In Abdellah's case, we can discover how his migration trajectory oscillates between carefully planned decisions in advance and rather spontaneous reactions to given situations. When he was in possession of a French *carte de séjour*, it was easy to move back and forth between Tunisia and France. At other moments, he was formally denied this possibility of transnational mobility. However, at a certain point he ignored the imposed rules of mobility and moved to France anyway as a clandestine migrant. Reading this pattern of mobility through the analytical lens of the thesis of the autonomy of migration AOM, it can be understood as a moment of appropriation of mobility. Ignoring the rules of transnational mobility that are imposed upon him, he decided to enter France without a residence and labour permit.

A similar case can be made for Foued's migration trajectory. He did not follow the rules of the game that were imposed upon him and simply refused to return "voluntarily" back home. In his case, it was an appropriation of transnational mobility *within* Europe, and his refusal to comply with the imposed rules can be read as the expression of a self-determination of his own mobility.

However, both cases illustrate how the refusal of subjugation to the dominant rules of mobility and the claiming of one's own right of transnational mobility simultaneously imply the subjugation to another regime of mobility. In the case of Foued, it means to muddle through in Switzerland as a clandestine migrant, living from day to day and remaining trapped in insecure low-paid jobs due to the lack of any residence permit. Furthermore, it signifies to live with the permanent fear of being discovered by police forces.[75] His decision to leave Switzerland and move on to France can be read as an appropriation of mobility that ignores the explicit rules of the European border regimes. At the same time, one should not forget that it is a pattern of mobility that is more or less imposed on him, due to the lacking residence permit in Switzerland and the recent arrest by the police.

The same applies to the case of Abdellah. Reading his ignorance of the legal framework that shaped his possibilities of transnational mobility only in terms of appropriation of mobility is too simplistic. Ignoring one set of – explicit or implicit – rules is as much a moment of autonomy as it is a moment of subjugation to another set of rules. The choice to continue living in France without a residence permit meant at the same time that Abdellah was deprived of the possibility of a temporal return back to Tunisia as long as he was lacking

[75] Lucht uses the term "hustle" to describe this marginal life at the fringes of society (see Lucht 2015).

this document. The escape from one logic of the migration regime leads to other constraints and subjugations.

The Emergence of the Migratory Subject

This brings me to the third and last remark with regard to the six migration biographies: the emergence of the migratory subject. Some migration studies describe how this type of precarious migration practices at the margins of the state create new ties of solidarity between the excluded (e.g. Lucht 2012). With respect to the migration trajectories this chapter presented, the narratives of the six informants tell a different story. The unpredictability of the migration trajectories and the fragmented biographies as a result of the imponderanility of the everyday life as a clandestine migrant lead to highly unstable and volatile social ties. Amine's time in Milan when he was living with a group of fellow citizens in an abandoned factory or Foued who was supported by a friend during his time in Biel both tell us rather stories how fragile the networks and social ties are of those who are on the road. Solidarity is a fragile and marginal good. The common experience of clandestine migration at the margins of the state does not forge bonds of solidarity, but rather fragments them. Uncertainty, unpredictability, and the imposed permanent mobility are elements that undermine solidarity and connectedness.

As a result, the mobile subject – subjugated to precarious mobile practices at the margins of the European border regimes – is characterised by isolation and

solitude. I am aware that this conclusion is influenced by the research method used here that relies on individual migration biographies, thus emphasising the individual over the group. As a consequence, this particular approach tends to underestimate the role of social networks, and in the context of the migration biographies of clandestine Tunisian migrants, social networks are indeed important during the clandestine trajectory through Europe. Especially relatives who are in possession of a legal residence permit can serve as an important anchor point. Nonetheless, it is striking to discover through these six migration biographies how the European border regimes create precarious mobile practices and how these practices often lead to isolation.

In order to link these last remarks back to the theoretical discussion of the appropriation of mobility, de Certeau's distinction between strategies and tactics is a helpful tool to describe the agency of the dominant and the subaltern (de Certeau 1990). As tactics, he describes actions of those who are not in power to set the rules of the game in society. Rather, they have to navigate through, trying to find some loopholes in the pursuit of their own intentions and plans. The migration trajectories described above contain exactly this type of agency. It is an agency that can be read as an appropriation of mobility in the vein of the thesis of the autonomy of migration AOM, yet it is a heavily pre-structured agency. All six interlocutors are always on the search for opportunities that allow them to claim transnational mobility, pursue their goals, and claim at least partially their freedom of movement.

VI. Seeing Migration Like a State

The previous chapter explored the experience of the border regime through six different migration biographies. More precisely, it examined how transnational mobility, departure, and return are experienced and navigated in the everyday. It thus adopted the perspective of the thesis of the autonomy of migration AOM as an analytical lens for the study of transnational mobility, though it slightly reformulated it, highlighting the dialectics of transnational mobility between appropriation and subjugation instead of a straight-forward reading solely in terms of autonomy.

The following chapter explores the governance of transnational mobility from the perspective of the state. It narrows down the focus to one particular aspect: the governance of return. It thereby focuses in particular on Switzerland's programme for assisted voluntary return migration AVR for Tunisian asylum seekers. This explicit narrowing-down of the focus on the AVR programme

prepares the ground for the concluding discussion in Chapter Eight that answers the dissertation's overall question of the contradictions of the liberal nation state that emerge in the administration of transnational migration.

This chapter explores how the state "sees" migration and return through the detailed study of two elements that allow me to compare the migrant perspective with the state perspective. It first studies how return migration bureaucrats use the flowchart to imagine the ideal type of a return migration bureaucracy and how this influences the way they see migration. As a symbol for the flawless and uncontested administration of asylum cases, the flowchart is not only the expression of this imagination but deploys a prescriptive power over the social reality. The second part of this chapter scrutinises the notion of the successful return. In contrast to what the six migration biographies from the previous chapter have shown, a successful return in the administrative logics of the return migration bureaucracy is stripped from all its ambiguities and contradictions and reduces it to a single and straightforward narrative. Again, I argue that this imagination of a successful return by the return migration bureaucracy does not remain without effects. It deploys a normative power on social reality and the way the AVR programmes are designed and realised. Overall, this chapter demonstrates how the return migration bureaucracy aims at making governable and predictable the ambiguous and contradicting social reality that we encountered through the migration biographies in the previous.

In order to study how the state "sees" migration, as the title of this chapter suggests with reference to James Scott (1998), I rely on the practices and self-legitimisation strategies of institutions and individual bureaucrats. Discussing with return migration bureaucrats their work, they often place it in the broader perspective of the overall asylum bureaucracy. I will use the notion of legitimisation strategy to describe how they reflect on their work and their own position. I use this notion without a normative twist. Legitimisation strategy as it is used in this chapter is simply the description how return migration bureaucrats make and give sense to their individual work, and to the way how they see their institution.

Max Weber distinguishes two different ideal types of bureaucratic work; the "Subsumtion unter Normen" (subsumption under norms) and the "Abwägung von Zwecken und Mitteln" (balancing ends and means), as he writes (Weber 1922: 664).[76] The first ideal type imagines the work of the bureaucrat in the form of a "cog-in-the-machine". It evokes precision, efficiency, replicability, and ignores differences and ambiguities. The bureaucrat's work is considered as a quasi-mechanical activity, the bureaucrat itself an infallible machine. In their daily work, bureaucrats follow strict general rules and apply them to individual cases. This idea of the application of general rules to individual cases is what

[76] Weber introduces the second principle, as he rejects the idea of a comprehensive law. Whenever the bureaucrat is faced with a case that is not entirely covered by the existing law, he has to apply the second principle of bureaucratic work and carefully balances ends against means (Weber 1922:664).

arguably comes close to a common-sense notion of bureaucracy – especially when it is used in its pejorative meaning. The second ideal type concedes more discretionary power to the individual bureaucrat. Here, the general principle is not the compliance with the explicit bureaucratic rules and procedures. Instead, the guiding principle is "the appropriate procession of cases". As the discussion of the empirical material in the two main parts of this chapter will highlight, the self-legitimisation strategies of the return migration bureaucrats oscillate between these two ideal-types of bureaucratic work.

The World is a Flowchart

The flowchart is a way to describe and represent the relationship between single bureaucratic actions and the bureaucracy as a comprehensive principle and institution. I take the artifact of the flowchart as a way to explore how the return migration bureaucracy imagines itself. It attracted my interest during my research, as a particular flowchart was used repeatedly by my interlocutors to explain and legitimate their work. In this part, I approach the flowchart from two different angles. First, I explore the images proliferated through the flowchart. I thus understand the flowchart as a form that carries specific images about the governance of migration and the migratory subject. And second, I explore the narratives that emerge around and with the flowchart; I thus examine how bureaucrats use the flowchart to explain and legitimate their work.

I begin this subchapter with a short description of an interview situation with two return migration bureaucrats and how they made use of a flowchart to explain to me how the migration procedure works. I then continue to ask what a flowchart is in general and explore the ideas it contains about the social world. More specifically, I examine what the flowchart of Switzerland's asylum bureaucracy tells us about the question how the state sees migration. This discussion will lead to the conclusion that the flowchart can be considered as an important aspect of the totalising dimension of border regimes; it turns individuals into cases to be governed. The flowchart expresses a world view where an asylum case appears as a mere technical problem to be solved.

Generally speaking, the flowchart takes up two fundamental principles of bureaucracy: categorisation and hierarchisation (Handelman 2004). [77] Handelman traces the bureaucratic logic of classification and categorisation back to Aristotle's book on Categories from the Organon (Aristotle 1994). It was the first attempt to describe systematically the principle of categorisation. For the practice of classification, the critical question is not "how accurately this classification reflects the world it is made to act upon" (Handelman 2004:20), but rather the principle of precision that distinguishes better classifications from worse.

[77] Interestingly, Handelman does not refer to another principle the flowchart is often associated with: the algorithm. In computer sciences, the flowchart is a widely used visualisation technique of computer algorithms.

In contemporary everyday managerial language, a flowchart is the illustration of a path-dependent procedure that prescribes how to solve a given problem. The flowchart visualises the solution, subdivided into single steps and decisions. With this characterisation, the flowchart is a tool for bureaucratic organisation par excellence. In the case of the flowchart, the categorisation and hierarchisation concerns bureaucratic action and the way these single actions succeed each other. There is no space for negotiation or ambiguities; every decision is broken down into a simple and binary Yes/ No decision. As such, it is a representation of the ideal of bureaucratic work in the first sense of Weber. Cases are processed through the subsumption under norms.

In conversations and interviews with different return migration bureaucrats, regularly it occurred that my informant pulled out a flowchart at a certain point of our conversation in order to explain and illustrate the asylum procedure. Often, it was my – deliberately – "naïve" introductory question that provoked this reaction. In my interviews with return migration bureaucrats, I used to begin the conversation with the question what my informant's work was all about. But instead of an account of the self-perception of one's own tasks (what I intended to provoke with my question), several of my interlocutors elaborated the general framework of the asylum procedure. The return migration bureaucrats started with an explanation of Switzerland's asylum procedure, beginning with the asylum application in one of the reception centres at the border or at the airport, continuing with the processing of the case at the State Secretariat for Migration SEM on the one hand (which is the task of the federal administration), and the

accommodation of the asylum seeker, which is a cantonal task. Typically, the whole explanation of the procedure ended with the description how the final decision is taken. If the final decision is contested by the asylum seeker, it takes an additional detour and is revised by the Federal Administrative Court. Often, the bureaucrats emphasised the different levels of responsibilities. In particular, they highlighted the responsibilities of the federal administration consisting in taking decisions, while the cantonal authorities are responsible for the execution of these decision.

After the third presentation of the very same flow chart, which is made public on the SEM's internet site anyway, I was tempted to interrupt my informant, because I felt bored to become explained the same procedure once again. However, I became aware that this insistence on the flowchart is significant for the way migration bureaucrats see and conceptualise migration. It is a way of framing their own action and reflecting their position in the bureaucratic apparatus. Therefore, I became more and more interested in the way the bureaucrats used the flowchart to make an argument on the administration of migration.

The flowchart in question itself is very simple and describes along general lines the asylum procedure in Switzerland. It uses pictograms and few explanatory text to visualise the procedure from the initial deposition of the asylum application until the final decision. It begins with the submission of the asylum application

at the border or at the airport and describes the possible paths for the asylum seeker and the application, visualised with arrows in different shapes.

The flowchart combines two different issues: On the one hand, it describes the waypoints the asylum seeker passes, starting at the border and the transfer to the reception and procession centre, and further to the cantonal transit centre. Depending on the outcome of the asylum decision, the trajectory continues either with the transfer of the asylum seeker into his own apartment in the case of a positive decision. In contrast, a negative decision leads to the obligation to leave the country – either voluntarily or in the form of forced deportation. On the other hand, the flowchart not only describes the paths of the people, but also the bureaucratic paths of the asylum application itself, represented in the artifact of the file. It visualises who processes the application and who takes the critical decisions. The flowchart shows also the different possible outcomes of the asylum decision procedure, as well as the possibilities of appeal against a decision. It is obvious that the target audience of the flowchart is not the experts, but rather the broader public, thus the simplified visualisation leaving out some important details.

In its reductionist and schematic representation, the flowchart develops a particular narrative. Each waypoint is the logic consequence of the former decision. Every path is predefined. All in all, the flowchart describes a consistent system that follows one single logic. However, the following case from my fieldwork shows how the flowchart, used as a tool of self-legitimisation of

bureaucrats, conceals with its neat and tidy picture the different competing logics that contradict and undermine each other in social reality.

The Flowchart as a Tool for Self-Legitimisation

It was in summer 2015, when I was on my way to an interview with a return migration official of a mid-sized canton in Switzerland. I crossed the town by foot in order to reach the public administration at the other end of the city centre. The return migration office was located in an annex of the foreigner's police office; a beautiful baroque building in the old town.[78] As it is a rather small canton, the individual administrative departments are small as well. One knows each other in the administration. The physical proximity of the different parts of the administration contributes to this impression. This ensemble of buildings unites different part of the administration. The return migration office itself was located in the same building as the foreigner's police. This spatial proximity is no coincidence. In contrast to other cantons where the return migration office is part of the social and welfare department, it is a subdivision of the foreigner's police in this case. As we will discover, the two return migration bureaucrats with whom I conducted the interview emphasised precisely this

[78] The following ethnographic observations are from August 2015. I agreed with all of my interlocutors to anonymise the observations. Therefore, some details that would allow to identify this particular office have been modified. The direct quotes were tape-recorded, indirect quotes and the other observations are reconstructions from the fieldnotes.

aspect as a virtue of the return migration bureaucracy. The proximity facilitates their work, they will argue.

I had an appointment with the responsible return migration counsellor. To my surprise, when I showed up in the office, his superior was also present for the interviews. The return migration counsellor was an elder man, a few years before his retirement. When he introduced himself, he mentioned that he had been living in Tunisia too. As a young man he was working in a hotel for a certain time where he was responsible for the foreign tourists. Recalling this episode in his life, he emphasised that through this work, he had acquired "intercultural skills", as he labelled it, that he considered as particularly useful for his actual work as a return migration counsellor.

The other interlocutor was much younger – I estimated him in his late thirties – and introduced himself as the head of the department. In the following conversation, he would remain silent for most of the time. Only here and there he would underline the explanations of the return migration counsellor. When he expressed his own position, he was eager to highlight the efficiency of his unit in contrast to other cantons and highlighted this with reference to the high number of so-called voluntary returns his office was able to proceed.

After a first round of introduction, the return migration counsellor opened the conversation with an explanation of how the return migration office works. I knew already what would follow next. He pulled out the already mentioned

flowchart, handed it over to me, and pointed with his pencil to the bottom of the diagram: "Our task is that those with a negative decision leave Switzerland" he explained to me and tapped with his pencil on the part of the flowchart that visualises the departure from Switzerland. His superior took over and continued:

> *"We do not like forced deportation. Our aim is that every rejected asylum seeker returns voluntarily to his home country. The best thing we can do to achieve the voluntary return of every rejected asylum seeker is to cooperate closely with the foreigner's police. Close cooperation with the other divisions who are involved in the asylum decision process is crucial. Sometimes, this is challenging. As you know, I am just here to implement the negative decision. But I do not belong to the police. So, I try to convince the migrants that it is for their own sake to return to their country of origin."*

Apparently, the head of the department made a difference between the foreigner's police and his own office, although in reality, his office was a subdivision of the foreigner's police.

After this explanation, it was again the return migration counsellor's turn. He continued his explanations and emphasised once again the particular role of the return migration office. As his superior, he did not consider himself and his office as part of the police. This insistence of both of my interlocutors was all the more surprising with respect to the fact that the foreigner's police is located in the very

same compound just over the courtyard. In contrast to the police that enforces negative asylum decisions also with the use of physical violence as *ultimo ratio*, both interlocutors considered the role of their own office rather as an intermediary who navigates between the desires and wishes of the migrants and the requirements of the asylum procedure.

In contradiction to this self-representation, both officials considered themselves as responsible for the enforcement of the negative decisions as well and not only as service providers who offer services to asylum seekers. This enforcement would guarantee the "credibility of the system", as the head of the department argued. Linked to this aspect, they both considered the enforcement of a negative decision as a matter of fairness towards all asylum seekers. Fairness consisted in the application of the same rules to everybody, as the return migration counsellor explained. Simultaneously, both emphasised that the enforcement of a negative decision should preferably take "the human way" without the use of physical violence.

In these rather contradictory statements, we can discover at least two conflicting principles. Both of them are captured in some ways in the flowchart. Using the flowchart to explain their work, both interlocutors emphasised on the one hand that they are part of the asylum bureaucracy. They considered the enforcement of the decisions of the previous instances as the major aim of their work. But at the same time, they insisted on the separation between the return migration office and the rest of the foreigner's police.

To an outsider like me, this contradiction seems obvious, yet they completely glossed over it in their accounts. How can we interpret this apparent contradiction? A closer examination of the logics of the flowchart provides a hint and reveals two different modes of operation.

The simple enforcement of the decision of the previous (and higher) instance is one mode of operation of the return migration bureaucracy expressed in the flowchart. It is the narrative put forward by both of my interlocutors to highlight the consistency of their work. This narrative supports the logic of the flowchart that merges the different actors of the asylum bureaucracy with their competing logics and interests into a single system under one single logic and with one single purpose: to process asylum cases in a consistent way. The flowchart connects the different steps of the asylum bureaucracy into a coherent and all-encompassing system. It leaves no space for frictions or contradictions, and it imagines the asylum system as a smooth and flawless system. Following this logic, the asylum bureaucracy has one single task: processing the individual case according to the prescribed rules and paths as visualized in the flowchart.

This is a very particular view on asylum and mobility, far away from the way it is experienced and expressed through the narrated migration trajectories in the previous chapter. Here, processing cases is transformed into a mere technical issue. The only critical question is whether the system runs smoothly and without frictions. The return migration office and its bureaucrats contribute to the smooth operation of the asylum bureaucracy. This is considered as a virtue

that contributes to the "credibility" of the asylum bureaucracy, as one of the bureaucrats expressed it.

This machine-like imagination of the asylum bureaucracy brings up the question of responsibility: How do the return migration bureaucrats describe their own responsibility? As they do not only refrain from questioning the decisions of the previous instance but would consider this as a violation of the principles of their job, they maintain a particular idea of responsibility that is not directed towards the individual case, but rather towards the system as such. In other words, the return migration bureaucrats are committed to follow the rules and enforce the decisions of the previous instance. They do not question or challenge the decisions. The powerful idea of being part of an encompassing system and being responsible to contribute to its flawless operation expresses a type of individual responsibility that is geared towards structures and forms, rather than the individual case. In Max Weber's (1922) terminology, this type of responsibility can be described as the bureaucratic ethos. He distinguishes between "formale, rationale Sachlichkeit" (Weber 1922: 664) of the bureaucracy that is geared towards the compliance with the rules on the one hand, and the "materielle Gerechtigkeit" that is geared towards the individual case (Weber 1922: 664).

The bureaucratic ethos follows the first principle of the *formale rationale Sachlichkeit*.[79]

However, this neat picture of the asylum bureaucracy as an all-encompassing system without frictions and contradictions becomes cracks when one of the involved protagonists does not comply with the rules: the asylum seeker. Assumed that he receives a negative decision and not willing to cooperate with the asylum bureaucracy, frictions emerge in the aseptic picture of a bureaucracy that simply applies general rules to individual cases. It is at this particular moment when the dark side of the asylum bureaucracy emerges in the form of forced deportation, looming as a threat in the background.

In the interview, the return migration counsellor identified the voluntary return migration programme as "the human way" of processing cases and "solving" the issue of rejected asylum applications. In contrast, he described the alternative – forced deportation – as "undesirable and unpleasant for everyone involved" in the asylum bureaucracy. This side remark contains a moral judgement and gives a hint that there are further principles at work that go beyond the mere procession of cases and the goal to keep the system running as smoothly as possible. The following subchapters examine these further principles. Besides the moral principle, it is the principle of the division of labour.

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[79] See also Paul du Gay (2000) for a detailed discussion of this distinction.

The flowchart visualises the division of labour in a neat way. It breaks the whole asylum procedure into individual tasks and assigs them to individual actors. Migration bureaucrats mobilise the principle of the division of labour as a legitimisation strategy of their work that contradicts the principle of pure rule-orientation. It introduces a different notion of responsibility and engagement than rule-orientation, as it insists on a certain degree of autonomy and discretionary power of the individual organisational units within the asylum bureaucracy, just as it concedes a certain degree of autonomy to the individual bureaucrat. In other words, the emphasis of the division of labour and autonomy shifts the focus of responsibility away from processes and structures towards the content of bureaucratic action. This allows to introduce the idea of a procession of cases „in the human way", as my interlocutor expressed it in the interview. This can be better explained with the example of the return migration offices that are – in contrast to the example above – independent from the foreigner's police.

Consultation, Not Enforcement

Most of the return migration bureaucrats who do not work in a return migration office attached to the foreigner's police department consider themselves more as social workers than anything else. In this context, a return migration counsellor explained to me that she "does not care" whether the migrant seeking for advice

in her office agrees in a voluntary return or not. She considers her role not as enforcing the rule of law, but rather as a holistic individual consultation on the migrant's future plans in general. Doing her job properly implies to support her clients in the best possible way and according to their wishes, as she explained.

This self-perception contrasts Bauman's argument on bureaucracy as pure instrumental reason (Bauman 1988). He argues that the division of labour within a bureaucracy leads to the fragmentation of responsibility, and eventually to the disinterest of the bureaucrat in the overall aim of bureaucratic action. Instrumental reason is the necessary condition that prepared the ground for the Holocaust, as Bauman argues, and it is a defining principle of modernity.[80]

The case of the bureaucrats in the return migration offices I studied, however, tell a different and more nuanced story. The bureaucratic organisation may not inevitably lead to the disinterest of the bureaucrat and to pure instrumental reason, although it is indeed one possible outcome. Furthermore, the division of tasks and the division of responsibility does not necessarily lead to its dissolving in diffuse structures with eventually no responsibility at all for the individual. As the second example shows, the division of labour might also lead to a certain autonomy of the actors involved – institutional and individuals alike. And this in turn may lead to a responsibility that is concerned much more with content

[80] Similar arguments have been brougth forward by other authors as well, se for example Arendt (1995) or Horkheimer (1947).

than with bureaucratic processes and forms, as the quotes of the second example show.

We can see here two different ideas of responsibility. I suggest differentiating these two positions as a *functionalist responsibility* on the one hand and a *human responsibility* on the other hand. The way bureaucrats use the flowcharts to legitimate their own work may lead to either position. As encountered in the first case, the functionalist position focuses on the overall system. It emphasises that the asylum procedure follows a single and encompassing logic. This stands in contrast to the second case that contains a human perspective. It develops a different narrative, emphasising the autonomy of the different actors involved in the asylum procedure. In this second case, the interdependence between responsibility and disinterest is symmetrically opposed to the interdependence in the case of the functionalist perspective.

Assessing Success

For the remainder of this chapter on how the state "sees" migration, I introduce a further ethnographic vignette that allows us to study the state's view on transnational mobility. It discusses how success is conceptualised and measured in the context of the return migration programmes.

The notion of success is an important point of reference, when bureaucrats talk about their work. The asylum bureaucracy in general is under the permanent

pressure from the politics to legitimate that the return migration programmes are a success, though it is never made explicit what success actually means. Often, the notion of success is not more than a vague point of reference. As an empty signifier (Lévi-Strauss 1987: 63-64), success is a vague and omnipresent point of reference. In the context of the return migration bureaucracy, the notion of success has two completely different meanings – at least. Either it refers to the successful return of the individual migrant, or it refers to the success of the return migration programme as a whole. The following ethnographic vignette exemplifies how success is an important point of reference of return migration bureaucrats and they are talking about it all the time.

"We don't know what a successful return means"

"Actually, we don't know what a successful return means." This was the surprisingly frank statement of a return migration bureaucrat who was responsible for the realisation of Switzerland's return migration programme for Tunisian asylum seekers.[81] I met her in her office in Switzerland, because I was looking for someone, who could provide me with detailed background information about the division of labour between the State Secretariat for Migration SEM and the International Office for Migration IOM before leaving for fieldwork in Tunisia. She was not directly involved in the consultation of

[81] This interview was conducted in August 2013.

potential return migrants and the development of the individual projects. Instead, as the head of the department, she was responsible for the implementation of the return migration programme. She had started to work in this position only recently before the interview took place. Her main task consisted in the monitoring of the programme, writing reports, maintaining the contact with the local staff in Tunisia and with the return migration offices in Switzerland. This meant she was never in direct contact with any return migrants in her daily work in contrast to the return migration officers, whose main task consists in the consultation of potential return migrants and the promotion of the programme.

At the beginning of our conversation, she remembered a recent meeting with her colleagues of the Tunis-based office. She praised the work of her colleagues and how they managed to make the individual return migration projects a success. Identifying the "poor education of most return migrants" as one of the main challenges of the return migration programme, she explained how her colleagues deal with this problem. As our conversation unfolded, at a certain point she passed me a booklet with brief summaries of a couple of return migration projects. The booklet was entitled "Success Stories". I skimmed the booklet and asked her how she and her organisation define as a successful return: "Actually, we don't know what a successful return means", she acknowledged. Neither had her organisation a definition of a successful return, nor were there any predefined criteria that would allow to measure it. She continued and explained to me:

"Hm, it is hard to define [a successful return; D.L.]. We evaluate each individual project after six months. So… basically, the criteria is whether the project still exists after that time, whether it survived economically. And maybe… most importantly, whether the return migrant has remained in Tunisia. But you see, this is not that much…"

This vague idea of a successful return was rather surprising for me as an observer, especially when one takes into account that Switzerland's migration office evaluates the return migration programme for Tunisian asylum seekers on a regular basis. How, I was asking myself, is it then possible to evaluate a program without having an idea of what you measure?

Digging deeper in documents and conducting further interviews, I discovered two dimensions of success and successful return that emerge as the dominant ideas in the governance of return migration. The first idea of successful return is expressed through the use of statistics and numbers. It refers to the number of Tunisian asylum seekers who return to their country of origin with the so-called program for assisted voluntary return. High number of return migrants – i.e. voluntary returns with the exception of forced deportations – is considered as a success. The second idea of success is expressed in the so-called success stories that portray a series of return migrants and their projects. This introduces a more subjective side to successful return. In this case, the notion of success refers to the realisation of individual return migration projects. In other words, there is

both a quantitative notion of successful return and a qualitative notion. Let me explore this aspect in more detail.

Narrating Success

The qualitative notion of a successful return is of particular interest, as it combines the perspective of the return migration office with the subjective perspective of the individual return migrants. In the following, I ask what success means in the perspective of return migration bureaucrats and the migration bureaucracy in general. I explore the different notions of a successful return and show how these ideas structure the organisation of the return migration programmes, as well as they legitimise and justify the work of the return migration counsellors. This leads to the concluding discussion of the specific image of the successful return migrant that is enshrined in these success stories. Through these success stories, one discovers the emerging frictions between a totalising mode of governance on the one hand and the individualising mode of governance on the other hand that are both characteristic for the operation of the governance of voluntary return.

Success stories are short summaries of individual projects realised by return migrants with the support of the return migration programme.[82] They showcase

[82] The following description relies on booklets with success stories I collected during my research. They were given to me by one of the return migration counsellors I interviewed.

on just two pages projects that are considered as typical examples for successful return migration projects. Each success story follows a stereotypical narrative. It begins with a summary of the migration trajectory and includes some remarks on the familial background and the socio-economic situation of the migrants before their departure. Typically, it omits a detailed account of the trajectory between the departure from Tunisia and the deposition of the asylum application in Switzerland. However, the previous chapter with its six migration biographies highlights that this time in-between is often more decisive for the understanding of the motivation to apply for asylum in Switzerland or the decision to return back to Tunisia. The fact that they stranded in Switzerland and decided to return at a certain moment is more the result of what happened before and not of a deliberate and well-thought decision as the typical success story narrative suggests.

In contrast to the experiences and the perspective of most of the Tunisian migrants I encountered, the success stories picture the asylum application in Switzerland as the decisive turning point. Typically, the asylum application is presented as a dead end. The narrative creates an image of the desperate asylum seeker who does not know how to continue his life. He faces a reality in Switzerland that does not meet his expectations. In this moment of desperation and disillusion, help comes in the form of assisted voluntary return: Together, return migrant and return migration counsellor draft a project. After the description of this decision to return back home and the preparations, the narrative fast-forwards and meets the return migrant again once he has set up his

business successfully and with the help of the return migration programme once back in Tunis. The whole story is accompanied by a couple of quotes of the portrayed return migrant. Typically, he testimonies how happy he is now back in Tunisia and tells the reader how the return migration programme has allowed him to restart his life.

Overall, the narrative is a straight-forward blueprint that depicts the AVR programmes as a solution to a dead-end. Through the programme, the asylum seeker as a passive object without any plans about his future is turned into an active and economically rational subject, who organises his life and learns how to set up and run a business successfully. The stereotypical narratives of the success stories contain two different notions of success. The first aspect links success to help and assistance. And the second aspect links success to the becoming of an economically rational subject.

The aspect of successful help demonstrates the effectiveness of the return migration programme. It describes how useful the return migration programme is for the return migrant; the success stories highlight the immediate impact of the programme on individual lives. With comparably little financial commitment, it is possible to make a huge difference for the lives of the individual return migrants, thus far the underlying idea.

However, the connection between the notion of a successful return and help contains a further dimension. The success stories suggest that the return migrant

is unable to organise his own life as he bases his decisions on false expectations and who is therefore in need of help from outside. As the previous chapter on the individual migration trajectories has shown, this is a very narrow and questionable assumption. In order to explain this point, let me return to the case of Fathi, the fisherman from Jebiniana. His decision to escape Tunisia and his migration trajectory was not driven by irrational choices and illusions, but firmly grounded in the everyday experience of how the local economy works and how marginal his chances were to find a stable job. Therefore, he made a very rational and well-thought decision to stop working as a fisherman and investing into the *harraga* instead. In other words, as the whole small-scale fishing industry in the area is on decline and one makes barely a living with this economic activity, he decided to invest in another plan, the *harraga*. It is true that the *harraga* is a high-risk strategy with a very uncertain outcome. But to continue working in the fishing industry is also a decision with a high degree of uncertainty. The return migration project thus did not turn Fathi into an active subject that makes rational choices in economic terms: in fact, he was it already. Therefore, his application for a return migration project was just another decision that made perfectly sense to Fathi in his particular situation and at that particular time. By the way, he demonstrated his economic skills later once again, when he found a way to keep the money from the return migration project that was provided to him in order to buy a boat within the extended family, as he simply bought his uncle's boat.

Counting Success

Opposed to this notion of success that relies on individual stories and the assumed impact of the programme on individual live, there is a second idea of success. It is an idea of success that does not focus on the individual return migration project, but rather on the success of the return migration programme as a whole. And in this case, the narrative is different. It is not the individual project that matters. Return migration officials often use the word "impact" in order to describe the success of the AVR programme for Tunisian return migrants. Impact becomes a synonym for success. And this impact is measured in terms of numbers of so-called voluntary departures of Tunisian asylum seekers.

Even in this case that relies on the simple technique of counting numbers, there is no clear idea of what success means at all and how it is measured. As we will see, the category of voluntary departures is far from a meaningful and well-defined entity, as the number of voluntary departures includes every registered departure with the exclusion of the number of forced deportations. This category suggests an implicit idea of a causal link between voluntary departures and the programme, as high numbers of voluntary departures are used to legitimise the success of the return migration programme. In interviews as well as in the numerous reports on the programme on behalf of the administration and politicians, each time I was given the number of departures of Tunisian asylum seekers who had decided to join the return migration programme, when I asked

what success means. However, when I raised the question how this number is related to the actual number of successfully realised projects, no one was able to provide me with a precise number, nor were there any statistics that would answer this question. My interlocutors explained this failure with the still ongoing programme and the lacking final evaluation that would allow to determine the precise number of realised projects.[83] Interim reports I was able to consult always provided a list with the precise number of voluntary departures of Tunisian asylum seekers, while the number of realised projects remained a rough estimation at best. The only conclusion I could draw from it: Apparently, for the return migration bureaucracy as a whole, the number of realised projects is not a relevant item to measure success, in contrast to the number of departures that is indeed a key figure.

The most accurate number of realised projects provided a return migration official who was working for the International Organisation for Migration IOM in Tunis. Due to the lack of any detailed statistics, she based her estimation on her personal experience. We met during a workshop organised by a French research institute in Tunis, where she was engaged as an expert.[84] During a coffee break, we came into a conversation and I asked her how her office has to report back to Switzerland's State Secretariat of Migration SEM. Her first answer was

[83] This information dates from 2014, when the programme was still running.

[84] This conversation dates from May 2014.

that there were no detailed statistics available with regard to the number of realised projects. It was the same answer I was given already a couple of times before. But then she deliberated for a moment and added that she would guess that two thirds of all Tunisian migrants who return in the context of the AVR programme successfully realise their project. This is a "fairly high success rate", she added.

Comparing Different Ideas of Success

I do not aim at making an argument how to measure the impact of the return migration programme in the most accurate way. What we can retain from this discussion so far is rather that this second notion of success does not focus on realised return migration projects, but on the number of voluntary departures of Tunisian asylum seekers. Apparently, the second notion of success considers the number of realised projects as irrelevant. This finding suggests a reading of the AVR programme not as an administrative tool to facilitate returns of individual asylum seekers (as the success stories would emphasise), but rather as a tool for the governance of transnational migration with the goal of keeping the number of asylum seekers low in Switzerland. This interpretation is backed by several reports, for example the 2011 report *Wirksamkeit und Kosten der Rückkehrhilfe* that can be loosely translated as "effectiveness and cots of the return assistance."[85]

[85] http://www.ejpd.admin.ch/content/dam/data/pressemitteilung/2014/2014-06-10/ber-po-mueller-11-3062-d.pdf; last accessed 05.02.2016)

It measures costs and effects of the AVR programmes. Again, the report measures the effectiveness in the number of voluntary departures.

We can retain so far, both the success stories and the different approaches of measuring the effectiveness of return assistance lack any explicit conception of success. I read this lack of criteria as a hint that both the success stories and the interim reports have rather the function of legitimising the AVR programme towards different stakeholders than evaluating it and measure its actual performance.

The two meanings of success contain specific images of the migratory subject and the governance of migration, reflecting different ideas of migration policies. They both share the idea that the return migrant is the passive object of governance. In the first case, success is associated with the idea of the transformation of the passive migrant into an active and economically rational subject. In the second case, success refers to the number of voluntary returns, although the causal link between the programme and the number of return remains in the dark.

Governing Return Between Compassion and Repression

This chapter started with the question how the state "sees" migration. The analysis of the flowchart and its meanings has shown how the asylum bureaucracy imagines itself as a succession of coordinated and well-planned

actions and institutions that follow a strict and logic order. And the discussion of the notion of successful return highlighted how in reality "success" is used as a legitimising tool rather than an instrument for measuring performance, as the migration bureaucracy claims. Both cases show how the state sees migration: through the reduction of complexity. This reductionist representation of a complex and ambiguous social reality is the condition that makes social reality governable at all. However, it does not only describe social reality, it also prescribes it, as it forms the basis on which the state operates. In general lines, this follows Scott's (1998) argument how the state sees social reality. The material further shows that – despite its reductionist representation of social reality – the governance of return migration is not necessarily completely ignorant towards the individual subject.

In order to explore this point further, let me consider the different orientations of the self-perception of the return migration bureaucracy. The discussion of the flowchart and of the notion of success both reveal an orientation of the bureaucracy towards the self-perpetuation of the system and the maintenance of its inherent logic. This observation has been made and discussed also in the literature on bureaucracy that emphasises the self-perpetuating tendency of bureaucracies (e.g. Bauman 1998; Weber 1922: 660f).

However, there is a second orientation at work. Its principle is not self-perpetuation – in a Luhmannian-language one could call this autopoiesis (Luhmann 1987) – but the appropriate procession of cases. In the discussion of

the flowchart, one can discover this aspect in the insistence of the return migration counsellors on their autonomy and their discretionary power that allows them to judge cases on an individual basis. In the discussion of the notion of success, it becomes visible when the return migration bureaucrats understand success as the successful realisation of an individual project.

These two orientations are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Rather, they constitute each other. This double orientation of the return migration bureaucracy's self-perception corresponds to Didier Fassin's description of the contemporary European asylum policy in general. He argues that migration policies oscillate "between sentiments of sympathy on the one hand and concern for order on the other hand, between a policy of pity and a policy of control" (Fassin 2005:366). The return migration counsellor is the prototypical figure that combines the policy of pity and the policy of control.

However, there is a difference between the case of the governance of voluntary return this dissertation focuses on and the argument made in the literature on the humanitarianisation of the Europen asylum regime (e.g. Fassin 2005; Ticktin 2011, 2014). This strand of literature argues that a policy of compassion has replaced the language of rights. In the case of assisted voluntary return, it is the combination of a humanitarianism relying on the threat of violence in the form of forced deportation that has replaced the language of rights. The humanitarian act of an assisted return is based and relies on the threat of violence.

In short, it is a policy of compassion that conceals the underlying state-sanctioned violence of deportation.

In this particular setting, the principle of compassion is only conceivable against the backdrop of the threat of forced deportation. A return under the condition of the AVR programme has always to be considered within this larger framework. As the analysis of the two return migration officials and their interpretation of the flowchart in the first part of this chapter has shown, the logic of the enforcement of the decisions of the previous instance eventually means that a voluntary return simply anticipates the negative decision, rather than offering a real choice between two alternatives. This same tendency can be observed in Switzerland's latest asylum law reform from 2015 and accepted in a popular referendum in 2016. With the promise to speed up the often lengthy asylum procedures and in order to make it more transparent and fair, one of the announced measures was the systematic integration of assisted voluntary return. The idea is that return assistance should be systematically offered to any asylum seeker, and the sooner she or he withdraws his or her application and agrees in a voluntary return, the higher the benefit would be. Until now – as of mid 2016 – this idea has been tested in a pilot project in a reception and procession centre in the canton of Zurich but has not been implemented further yet.

This brings me to the last example that helps to illustrate how a policy of repression constitutes the policy of compassion. It is the case of a return migration consultation project of a local section of the Red Cross in a canton in

Switzerland. The project is entitled as „Detention: Future-Oriented And Return Migration Counselling". It offers return migration consultation for imprisoned rejected asylum seekers, who serve a criminal sentence.[86] The project description reads as follows: "The consultation takes place in the prison […] The consultation is based on the principle of serving the interest of the detained person."[87] Just recall that it is the Red Cross – still a synonym for humanitarian action – that is responsible for the realisation of the project. It gives the impression that the return migration consultation for the detainees is grounded in purely humanitarian reasons. The claim to base the consultation on the principle of "serving the interest of the detained person" conceals entirely the circumstances and constraints under which the counselling takes place; in the prison as the prototype of the "total institution" (Goffman 1990). It is even more significant in the case of rejected asylum seekers who are in administrative detention and not even serving a criminal sentence. Deprived from any real choice, return migration counselling in such a setting insinuates that there is still a choice. The policy of compassion that might aim at an alleviation of the hardship of forced deportation is presented in the form of an offer without

[86] This return counselling project is not part of the AVR programme, as rejected asylum seekers who serve a prison sentence are not eligible for assisted voluntary return. In exceptional cases, they may receive a small amount of money as a starting aid once back in their country of origin.

[87] Original: „Die Beratungen finden in den Hafteinrichtungen des Kantons Bern statt […] Die Beratungen orientieren sich am Interesse der inhaftierten Personen." (https://www.srk-bern.ch/de/migration/detention-perspektiven-und-rueckkehrberatung; accessed 09.10.2014, English translation D.L.)

engagement. Deprived of any alternatives of mobility, negotiation and choice are reduced to the terms of the return that are in total control of the institution.

As a conclusion, let me briefly return to Max Weber's important distinction between "formale rationale Sachlichkeit" (Weber 1922: 664; formal and rational objectivity) and "materielle Gerechtigkeit" (Weber 1922: 664, substantive fairness). Weber argues that bureaucracy only strives for formal and rational objectivity. It is unable to provide substantive fairness. He considers this self-restraint at the same time as a virtue of bureaucracies and deplores it as a failure. The interpretation of the return migration bureaucracy through the lens of Fassin's (2012) distinction between a policy of repression and a policy of compassion highlights how it is caught in Weber's dialectics of the bureaucratic self-restriction to formal and rational objectivity as a virtue and a failure at the same time. As long as the policy of control follows a mere bureaucratic logic, it relies on the principle of the formal and rational objectivity. When the bureaucrats argue that their work as return migration counsellors consists in the enforcement of negative decisions, they argue in the logic of a policy of control. In contrast, the policy of compassion cannot be entirely subsumed under and determined by a policy of repression, as well as the policy of compassion cannot be read as an analogy to the provision of substantive fairness. Rather, this chapter has shown that the policy of compassion is a false substitute of the principle of substantive fairness. It renders invisible the power structures inscribed in the logic of formal and rational objectivity of the return migration bureaucracy. The question of differentiated exclusion and the unequal distribution of possibilities

of mobility is concealed by these humanitarian actions of the return migration bureaucracy.

VII. Governing Voluntariness

"We are here to help those who need to leave Switzerland." This is a postcard's tagline advertising the services of a regional return counselling service in Switzerland. It perfectly captures the ambiguity of return counselling in a nutshell. Return counselling services offer advice and help, but address those who are brought into and captured in a situation of constraints by the very same border regime that now enters the scene as the helping and assisting authority. This chapter discusses this ambiguity of the return counselling service. It highlights the contradictions of assisted voluntary return AVR as an important part of border policies. Based on the interviews with return migration bureaucrats and the advertising material of the return counselling services, I discuss how the return migrant is conceived and shaped as a self-entrepreneurial subject. In the concluding remarks of this chapter, I suggest to read this governance of voluntariness through the lens of David Graeber's (2012; 2015)

remarks on bureaucracy and violence. This whole discussion prepares the ground for the following conclusion that takes up again the dissertation's main concern: the contradictions of the modern liberal nation in the governance of transnational mobility.

On Grey Geese and Return Counselling

During an interview with a return consultant on her work, my interlocutor gave me the above-mentioned postcard. It advertises the different services of the return counselling service. She explained that she designed the postcard herself during an advanced training course on public relations she had completed recently. The counsellor explained to me that she spent a lot of time developing the design of the postcard, reflecting on the appropriate message, and choosing the perfect image that illustrates the return counselling service's aim.

The postcard features the faint, blue coloured image of a group of grey geese flying from left to right. Above in white letters, the already mentioned tagline that reads: "We are here to help those who need to leave Switzerland." The postcard's backside contains further information about opening hours, the office's address, and the offered services. It targets rejected asylum seekers eligible for AVR.

Analysing the explicit message and the symbolic language of this postcard opens a window onto the meaning of the return counselling service and its imagined

role in border policies. On a first level, the postcard's symbolic language emphasises freedom and voluntariness; not only in text, but also through the image. The image of grey geese evokes the transnational character of migration between Europe and North Africa. It refers to the dense network of transnational connections between both shores of the Mediterranean. Furthermore, it contains a hidden specific reference to Tunisia, whether it is intended or not. Each year large grey geese colonies spend the winter in the Ichkeul national park with its mild climatic conditions compared to the cold winter in Europe. The Ichkeul region is a wetland in the North of Tunisia, located in the hinterland of Menzel Bourguiba in the *gouvernorat* of Bizerte. While the image of grey geese refers to a temporary transnational migration pattern, the return counselling service does not offer programmes for temporary transnational mobility, but a voluntary return that is intended as a one-time migration back to the country of origin. In this point, the image contradicts the intended aim of the return counselling service. While the grey geese come and go with the change of the seasons, the target group of the postcard is supposed to stay "at home" once back in Tunisia. This highlights the fact that there are different meanings of freedom of movement at stake, and it refers to the ambiguous and contested character of voluntary return assistance.

The image with the grey geese evokes a further meaning. Flying birds refer to infinite freedom. They cross borders at will in the rhythm of the seasons and the changing weather conditions. The postcard represents human mobility through the image of the mobility of animals, as if human mobility is in the same way a

natural right as it is for animals. The specific condition of transnational human mobility is stripped from any context and reduced to the mere flow of mobility. The visual substitution of human mobility with non-human mobility omits any reference to rules, regulations, or law that shape the conditions of human mobility. As a consequence, symbolically the counselling service is placed in an clean space devoid of any external constraints and imagines itself as if it was here to merely help migrants realising their projects of mobility.

However, the back of the postcard – and the whole text in general – tells a different story. The AVR counselling service is precisely *not* the place to seek assistance for the realisation of one's plans of transnational mobility. The tagline reveals that the service is for those "who need to leave Switzerland." This is plain text. In contrast to the visual reference to unlimited freedom and mobility, the text explicitly mentions the constraints of transnational mobility. Apparently, certain people are not allowed to exercise their right to transnational mobility but have to leave the territory. The postcard's text discloses no further details why the counselling service's target group is in a situation of constraints and "needs to leave Switzerland." It simply offers advice and consultation for those who are in such a situation.

The postcard thus makes explicit where AVR counselling is located. It is precisely at the point, where constraints and voluntariness meet. The notions of assistance, help, and voluntariness organise the work of the return migration bureaucracy during the consultation of migrants. The previous chapter already discussed the

dimension of assistance and help. The reconstruction of the realisation of return migration projects let us now discover how the return migration bureaucracy oscillates between these two poles of constraints and voluntariness. In particular, it allows to explore how voluntariness is conceived and realised.

"Facilitating Voluntariness"

With these preliminary observations in mind on the self-imagination of the work of return counselling, let us now have a closer look at the return counselling process itself. One key document during the return counselling is an outline of a "return project" (*Rückkehrprojekt)* the return migrant has to develop with the help of the return migration counsellor. On the basis of this outline, a first calculation of the costs is made. However, the return migration counsellor does not necessarily dispose of any specific knowledge on the country of return, on the local economy, or the local context in general. As I have learnt, this does not matter any way, as one return migration counsellor once told me. The only importance at this stage of the return migration process is to draft a first idea and not developing already an elaborated and detailed plan. Although a first general decision is taken whether the AVR programme supports the project, it seems to have particular relevance, as both return migrants and return counsellors told me repeatedly. Especially for return migrants, this signifies to agree in a voluntary return on very insecure grounds. They do not have the guarantee that they will get their project supported once back in their country of origin. This leads to an

increasing power asymmetry. For example, one interlocutor I met in Tunis decided to pull out from the programme as his original project idea was eventually rejected by the local return migration office in Tunisia. Frustrated and with the feeling of having been betrayed, he decided to break off any further contact with the office.

The fact that the first outline of the return project is often "of poor quality" – thus the voice of a return migration official in Tunisia – the Tunisian colleagues of the Swiss return migration counsellors often wondered how little knowledge they had on local context and the Tunisian economy. Others rather emphasise that the contribution of the Swiss colleagues is marginal to the development and realisation of the projects, "because we on the ground have to start again from scratch anyway," as a Tunisian return migration official explained.

In many cases, this difference in perspective is fuelled by different ideas of the role of the return migration officials. Although they share the assumption that all officials in the AVR migration bureaucracy are here to "help" and "assist" the asylum seekers, they consider themselves either as controllers and enablers, or as social workers and assistants. Let me explain this point by returning back to the AVR migration counsellor who designed the grey geese postcard in the introduction to this chapter. In the interview she told me:

"It is important that my clients feel responsible for their own projects. Therefore, they have to search for the necessary information for themselves. I assist them, when they need help."

The issue of responsibility comes up over and over again as a leitmotiv in conversations with return counsellors. It adds a further dimension to the provision of help, as explored already in the previous chapter. Like many of her colleagues, the return counsellor stresses the importance of responsibility, and how her work is geared towards the goal that asylum seeker "assume responsibility" for their return. It is an expression that shows how return counsellors consider their clients as persons who do not assume responsibility on their own. Therefore, they see their mission in raising awareness for the self-responsibility of the return migrants' projects.

The AVR migration counsellors' widespread assumption of the return migrants' lack of self-responsibility is interpreted in two different. Either it is interpreted as an outcome – and failure – of the asylum system that produces passive subjects, or it is interpreted in an individualistic perspective intertwined with a cultural reading of Tunisians as "not used to work and assume responsibility."[88] It is an interesting detail that bureaucrats who tend to the first interpretation

[88] It is worth noting that this culturalist assumption can be found not only among Swiss return migration counsellors, but as well – and often even more strongly expressed – by AVR migration officials in Tunisia, though in the second case, the very same expression should be read less as a culturalist assumption, but rather as a classicist assumption. Often in the same age group as the return migrants, the AVR migration officials have another educational background with degrees in higher education, either from a university or a university of applied sciences.

consider their work rather in terms of empowerment, while those who tend to the second interpretation consider their own work in terms of help and charity. No matter where return counsellors position themselves in this field between empowerment on one side, and help and charity on the other side, both camps draw a sharp line between their work as return counsellors and the foreigners' police. The following section explores the return counsellors' permanent effort to uphold and highlight this separation.

Return Counsellor and Return Migrant – A Complicated Relationship

The general tendency among the AVR migration counsellors to draw the line between counselling and policing (in the form of the foreigners' police) is reflected in different ways – discursively and symbolically. On a symbolical level for example, it is often expressed in the way the return migration offices are arranged, where consultation takes place. Typically, these offices avoid giving the impression of an ordinary administration. Rather, return counsellors try to create a warm and welcoming atmosphere. The following exemplarily description of such an office shows how this is achieved. The description derives from the fieldnotes I took at the occasion of an interview with a return counsellor.

The return counsellor's office was located in the highly secured and controlled compound of one of the reception and procession centres in a smaller border town in Switzerland. After registration as a visitor at the entrance of the centre, you had to pass several security gates in order to reach the inner parts of the

compound. Here, hidden at the end of a long and winding corridor, the office was located on the first floor. From one window you could see the inner courtyard, a grey concrete square with a few benches. The other window – the blinds half closed – showed a no-man's land between an industrial zone, a main road, and the railway tracks. One corner of the office was equipped with a couch and a low table, an old suitcase and a small palm tree stood close by. On the wall, some maps completed the scenery. The whole arrangement reminded of a travel agency rather than an office of the state administration, though it remained a rather desperate attempt to create a warm and welcoming atmosphere. The whole decoration stood in sharp contrast to the whole security architecture of the building in concrete. In another return migration office, the counsellor had pinned a series of postcard on the wall behind her desk. These were postcards former clients had sent her after their return. All of these symbols aimed at the setting AVR consultation apart from the rest of the asylum bureaucracy. Instead, they aimed at creating proximity between counsellors and return migrants.

On certain occasions, these attempts to create a more informal and intimate atmosphere led to the confusion of the type of advice the office provides. Migrants who expected legal advice complained to me that the office was not able to provide it. "They should fight for us, and appeal against the decision. But instead, I was only given advice on the possibilities of return" I was told for example by Foued, when we were talking about his experiences in the reception

and procession centres in Switzerland.[89] It was this disillusion that led him to take the decision to leave the centre and to try finding a way on his own in Switzerland. He is not the only person I met who made similar experiences. Many rejected Tunisian asylum seekers who were in contact with one of the return consultation services at one point or another during their trajectory expressed a deep ambiguity and mistrust about the role of the return consultation services. Instead of return consultation, most of them would have preferred legal advice, as they told me when asked about their experience. Legal support – and not return counselling – would have allowed them to appeal against the projected negative decision.[90] For many of them, return consultation was only the second-best option, lacking "proper legal advice" as an informant expressed it. In contrast to a legal aid office, return consultation is not considered as something serious by many Tunisian asylum seekers, though there were indeed few who took a different stance. This minority argued that return consultation service had at least a substantial outcome. Or, as a former Tunisian clandestine migrant explained to me in Tunisia: "It gave me access to return assistance. And this is why I sought for advice."

[89] See also Foued's migration biography in Chapter 5.

[90] Rejected asylum seekers do have the possibility to appeal against a negative decision. And there are legal aid offices who take in charge these cases. However, many of my informants were unaware of the precise legal procedure. And at the moment when they came in contact with the return consultation service, the time limit for appeal had already expired.

The thorough attempts to separate the different stages of the border regime is one important strategy of the AVR counsellors when they interact with return migrants. We discovered this tendency already in the analysis of the flowchart and how it is mobilised to separate AVR from the decision-making process in Chapter Six. AVR counsellors deny that they are part of the very same border regime that differentiates the possibilities of transnational mobility. In contrast, they consider themselves as advocates of the rejected asylum seekers, thus imagining themselves as outsiders to the asylum administration. During a conversation with me, one of the consultants explicitly insisted that she does not consider the aim of her work as the "execution of deportation orders."[91] She explained that consultancy only works when it is an open-ended process without any expectations of the possible outcome from her part. This echoes the logic of consultancy in social work, which emphasises the importance of a working alliance (*Arbeitsbündnis*) between counsellor and client; a term that refers to a mutual and sometimes explicit agreement on the aims and subjects of the consultation process.

Starting from this particular bureaucratic ethics, she considers AVR counselling as something clearly set aside from the whole rest of the asylum procedure. In her case, it was easier to uphold this separation, as the return counselling service

[91] This statement (from an interview with a return migration counsellor in June 2013) stands in sharp contrast with the two return counsellors portrayed in the last chapter and the argument they made with the help of the flowchart.

was not part of the state administration in contrast to the two return counsellors portrayed in the previous chapter. Instead, it was an independent organisation with a mandate from the state to provide AVR counselling for asylum seekers. The return counsellor thus considered the independence of her organisation as a virtue. She argued that this independence was essential to guarantee the high quality of the return consultancy. With her conviction of the necessity of the open-ended character of AVR consultation, she sometimes even suggested to some clients that a voluntary return might not be the best choice in their particular situation, though these were rather hidden remarks than concrete recommendations.

It is remarkable with how much effort return migration counsellors – consciously and unconsciously – hide the everyday violence in the form of the permanent threat of forced deportation that shapes and structures this institution. The consultation appears as a process that is not result-oriented and without prejudging the outcome. In this context, the return migrant is considered as someone who needs help and assistance. This terminology used in the everyday language of the return migration counsellors, but also in the written advertising material that is distributed among the asylum seekers, positions the return migration bureaucracy outside the structures of the asylum procedure. This ignores that they follow a similar logic of differentiated mobility.

The figure of the return migrant is imagined not only as a person that needs help or assistance, but also education. Therefore, return migration consultants see

their offer also as an opportunity to raise the self-responsibility of the return migrants. This aspect of education and the shaping of the migratory subject through the governance of its return is discussed in more detail in the following part.

Learning the Ropes of Doing Business

In order to better understand how the AVR migration programme aims at educating the return migrants "to become successful businessmen" I will have a closer look at what is happening in Tunisia, once the return migrants are back home. I examine how the AVR programme aims at transforming the return migrants from undesirable migrants into self-entrepreneurial subjects. This analysis begins with an encounter with professor Karaoui, as I will call him here. He teaches a compulsory three-days business training course for return migrants that is required to be eligible for applying for the remaining full amount of return assistance. It then shifts the attention on the realisation of an actual return migration project. I will analyse the encounter between two return migration officials and a return migrant. The latter was about to accomplish his project and asked for further support, which led to a dispute between him and the return migration officials who was on one of his inspection tours and visited the recently opened farm. Through these two encounters, I answer the question how the return migrant is shaped and imagined as a self-entrepreneurial subject in the eyes of the return migration programme.

Becoming a Successful Businessman

A small, accurately trimmed moustache, a neat suit with a perfect fit, and a distinguished language; this is professor Karaoui's appearance when I first met him in a cafe in El Menzah 1.[92] I was a bit ahead of time, sat down and ordered my coffee already. He joined me a couple of minutes later, ordered coffee and a *shisha*, greeted the others in the café. Apparently, he was a regular client. He knew the waiter and half of the other guests in the room. Soufiene Karaoui taught business administration at one of the universities in Tunis. He had developed the compulsory course for migrants who joined Switzerland's programme for assisted voluntary return migration and apply for the funding of their projects. Emphasising his cultural and symbolic capital, he presented himself as an overachieving businessman who had successfully established several companies. Trying to impress with his manners and his knowledge, he not only talked with me in his elaborated French – in general considered as a marker of distinction of the Tunisian bourgeoisie, proud of a so-called western-oriented education in colloquial language – but he also explained in detail his professional trajectory as a businessman. A bit later in the evening, an old friend of him joined our conversation They began to indulge in reminiscences when they had started their professional careers as businessmen some decades ago. Only very late, the

[92] The first meeting with M. Karaoui from which this description derives took place in March 2014.

conversation came back to my initial intention why I decided to meet him, and he began to explain to me his role in the AVR migration programme. Throughout the whole evening, the conversation meandered between stories of the two men about their successful business affairs in the past, and Karaoui's work as a professor for business administration at a private university in Tunis. In contrast to his job as a professor and businessman, he considered the engagement in the context of the return migration bureaucracy as his "duty as a proud citizen to contribute to the development of the country" as he told me once, although –as I concluded from his occasional side remarks – he was probably way better paid with this mandate than with is ordinary job at the university.

Overall, I was intrigued by two remarks of M. Karaoui. First, I was puzzled by the way he depicted his work as a civil duty, and second, I was wondering what he meant by the expression that he was responsible for "teaching the basis of doing business successfully" to the return migrants. In order to explore these two questions further, I immediately asked him whether it would be possible to attend one of his courses. Unfortunately, there were no concrete plans for further courses during my fieldwork time in Tunisia. For this reason, I was forced to substitute participant observation with other methods in order to explore these questions at least partially, and I opted for a reconstructive method (Bohnsack 2014). I conducted a series of interviews on this subject with different administrators in the return migration bureaucracy who were involved in this course, and I asked return migrants who completed the course about their

experiences and their perspective. In addition, I collected documents that were used for this course, for example the template for the return projects the beneficiaries have to fill in order to apply for the necessary funding. A central figure in this whole setting was professor Karaoui who designed the course on behalf of the IOM.

After the arrival in Tunisia, the business training course is a precondition for the return migrants in order to receive funding for their return migration project. Initially, the course took three weeks and was held in Tunis. During this time, the return migrants learned the "basis of doing business successfully," as M. Karaoui used to express it. However, it quickly turned out that the three-weeks course was wrongly designed, as M. Karaoui admitted. For the return migrants, it was not possible to spend three weeks in a row in the capital, as they could not afford the high living costs, especially when they did not know any relatives or friends there. In addition, M. Karaoui first insisted to teach the course in French; a language that many of the return migrants only barely knew. For these two reasons, the initial course was a failure. With this experience, M. Karaoui was commissioned to redesign the course and he transformed it into a three-day intensive course and switched the study language to Arabic. In this new format, the course consisted mainly in the completion of the application form and the drafting of the return migration project; a fact that M. Karaoui deeply deplored, as he would not be able to "educate the return migrants properly," as he disclosed to me.

Reduced to the correct completion of forms and a simple calculation of the estimated costs of the planned business activity, M. Karaoui nonetheless insisted on his initial ambition of teaching the return migrants at least some essentials of business administration. For this reason, the form included a "market analysis" and the identification of "direct competitors."

In contrast to M. Karaoui's enthusiastic account of the business training course, return migrants' take on the compulsory course was less positive. Many judged the course as a tiresome obligation in order to finally receive the necessary and promised funding for their project. In a certain way, even M. Karaoui would endorse this perspective. "The first course day is always really, really hard", he acknowledged. According to him, the participants would enter the seminar room with a lot of scepticism, and it always needed a lot of persuasive efforts from his side to convince them of the usefulness of the course. He considered this lack of interest as a result of the "poor education" of the return migrants in general.

This recurrent motive of a poor education seems to be the outcome of a conflict of a completely different socio-economic background between them. M. Karaoui's perspective on "doing business successfully" is shaped by his own middle-class background, disposing of the necessary means for investments. In contrast, the return migrants even struggled to make ends meet on a daily basis and to be able to cover the costs for spending three days in Tunis only to attend the course. Most of the return migrants did not dispose of any savings when they returned. Even more, many of them have had considerable debts to their

relatives, as they asked them to lend some money of the *harraga.* Instead of thinking about investments – as the business-minded teacher expected – they were rather thinking about how to pay back their debts. This was not only the case for example for Fathi, who had to find ways in order to pay back the debts to his uncle, but also for Amine, who was indebted to the family of his uncle as well. When Amine returned to his father's home, his social environment expected him to pay back the debts immediately.[93] After all, he was in Europe and everyone around him imageined that he made a lot of money there.

This shows that the diverging interests between M. Karaoui and his students is less a matter of education and more a matter of the respective socio-economic situation. The lack of "business-mindedness" of his students that M. Karaoui deplored so much is an effect of the economic pressure the return migrants were facing from their extended families. As a result, the return migrants' economic strategy is rather focused on short-term decisions, as they do not dispose of the necessary financial resources to pursue a long-term economic goals.

In the Field

The conflict between different economic strategies and the qualification of the return migrants' short-term economic strategies as irrational by return migration

[93] In the conversations, he sometimes refers to the paternal uncle when he told me that story. But at another moment, he insisted that it was a maternal uncle who had lend him some money in order to pay the *harraga*.

bureaucrats emerged again in a conflict between two return migration officials and a return migrant I witnessed when I was accompanying two local return migration officials on one of their "field trips" as they were called.

I received the long-awaited call from a return migration official from a regional return migration office. It was mid-September 2014 and I returned to Tunisia for a short follow-up fieldwork. Among other already planned meetings, I wanted to try for one more time to join a team of return migration officials on an inspection tour of some running projects. Since months I was trying to get access. Each time I was promised to be able to join one of the missions, the scheduled meeting was eventually cancelled. Therefore, I was not very hopeful that it would actually work out this time. All the more I was excited to receive the call. The local return migration official told me that they plan to visit the farm of a return migrant I will call Mouldi here. His farm was somewhere in the remote hinterland of Sfax.

My contact on the phone was working for one of the local migration offices. He holds a degree in agronomics from the university of Tunis, but originates from the South – from a small town close to Médenine. On the phone, we arranged the meeting for the next day and he insisted to pick me up at the hotel where I spent the night. It would have been impossible for me to reach Sfax the same day by train or with a *louage* (shared taxi circulating on a defined route) from Tunis, where I was based for this follow-up fieldwork. Although I told him that

my hotel was just a few steps away from his office and that I could easily walk the short distance, he insisted picking me up at the hotel.

In the next morning, the driver was waiting for me in the hotel lobby. He had parked the brand-new white SUV with diplomatic registration plates in front of the hotel in a parking lot. I climbed into the car and we drove the 60 seconds or so to the office of the local return migration office. There, the return migration official received me in his office. It was located on the first floor of an inconspicuous and modest building. He offered coffee and water and showed me the office. “No time to lose” he suddenly exclaimed, interrupted his explanations, and grabbed a pile of documents. We went downstairs back to the car, where he threw the documents on the back seat climbed into the car and slammed the rear door. He asked me to take the front seat. The driver grabbed some bottles of water from the boot, handed them over to me and the return migration official, and started the engine.

During the ride that took us northwards out of town, the return migration official explained his professional career at length. Before working in Sfax, he was engaged in another NGO development project in Zarzis near Djerba. Sometimes, he interrupted himself and pointed to a small farmhouse or a shop at the roadside and explained that these were all successfully realised return projects he had supervised.

An hour later or so, we arrived at Mouldi's farm. It was a couple of weeks before the *aïd el-kebir*. At this occasion, traditionally every Tunisian family who could afford it sacrifices a lamb for the feast. The 32-year-old farmer was rather restless. Thefts of lambs occur very often around the *aïd*, and Mouldi was worried about his livestock. Only a few days ago, someone had stolen a couple of lambs from a neighbouring farm. At least this was the rumour that spread here in the region. Therefore, he decided to sleep in the stable in order to protect his flock. "Any loss would be a catastrophe" he explained to me in Italian, the language in which we used to communicate. Due to his long stay in Italy, he spoke way better Italian than I Arabic. And as he left school early and without a diploma, he virtually did not speak any French. He was eagerly awaiting the next market days in the nearby villages. For the first time since he had started breeding sheep, he would be able to sell part of his livestock. This would allow him to cover some of his debts. Before his departure to Europe, he borrowed some money to pay the *harraga* from his uncle, and then again after his return in order to make a living. This uncle was now expecting that Mouldi would pay back his debts before the *aïd*.

The return migration expressed himself very satisfied with the progress of Mouldi's project. "As you see, he takes care of his livestock. And he works very carefully" he judged. But the longer the visit took, the more his mood was changing. At some point, he got apparently annoyed. During the inspection, Mouldi was asking him several times whether there would be the possibility to enlarge the project and get additional financial support for this. He was

considering buying one or two cows in order to "diversify" his business, as he called it. For obvious reasons, this business language immediately reminded me of M. Karaoui. As he explained to the local return migration official, his intention was to use the milk for daily own consumption, selling the surplus and the calves.

It was obvious that the return migration official did not agree at all. Rather angry now, he commented to me in French that Mouldi would always complain that he would not receive enough money. "It is always the same. They try to extract some extra money from the project", he concluded, branching out from this particular case to a general judgement through the use of the word "they", thereby referring to return migrants in general. He then switched back to this particular case and added: "But he knows very clearly that he already received the full amount of assistance."

It was not for the first time that I witnessed this suspicion against return migrants by staff members of the local AVR migration office. Among them, the saying was that in general, return migrants would be rather clever in exploiting strategies to obtain some extra money. This general mistrust is one of the reasons why return migrants would not receive direct payments. When I discussed this issue with a senior staff member the year before, he indirectly confirmed my guess. Distributing money directly to the beneficiaries would lead to situations, where they spent the money not for investing in the projects, but rather for

consumption, he argued.[94] However, Mouldi was suspicious too, as he explained in a calm moment when the return migration official was out of earshot. He suspected that he never received any money directly, as the return migration officials would give preferential treatment to a specific supplier of animal nutrition and construction material and would receive a share from the profits in return, thus far Mouldi's theory.

The dispute between Mouldi and the return migration official continued without coming to a conclusion. While Mouldi insisted that an additional cow would be "an investment for the future" that would allow him to better care for his family and in particular for his new-born son, the return migration official argued that Mouldi did not dispose of the necessary knowledge to raise cows, in addition to the fact that his project was concluded anyway and no further support could be guaranteed. Rather, he should focus on raising sheep, the return migration official recommended him. If at all, it would be better to invest the money to enlarge the herd of sheep. "But anyway, forget it. It is excluded to receive more money" he ended the discussion. Mouldi continued and replied that this would not serve his needs at all. What he needed was something that would give him an immediate benefit, he insisted. A cow that gives milk on a daily basis would cover his needs better, he argued once again. Annoyed by the on-going discussion, the staff member concluded that it was Mouldi's

[94] Informal conversation with senior staff member, November 2013.

responsibility how he would spend the earned money. “But in what concerns the project, there are rules. And I have to follow them!” he exclaimed.

This episode shows how the idea of doing business successfully – the leitmotiv of M. Karaoui’s educational effort – is interpreted in contradictory ways. On the one hand, there is the long-term economic strategy expressed in the logic of the return migration project and expressed in the reasoning of the return migration official. This logic interprets investments as long-term future-oriented. On the other hand, there is a different economic logic at work in the case of the return migrant. He has much shorter cycles of investment in mind, and the main concern is to be able to make ends meet by the end of the day. The dispute further highlights that the clash of these two different economic logics is embedded in unequal power relations. Mouldi and the return migration official clearly did not argue on a levelled playfield. Eventually, the long-term economic perspective of the return migration project prevails over the short-term and daily economic needs to make a living. Mouldi would not have another choice than adopting the long-term economic strategy, although it did not meet his interests.

This ethnographic vignette sheds light on a further aspect. The longer the whole assisted return migration procedure lasts, the more important becomes the imbalance of power between return migrant and the return migration bureaucrats. At the beginning, the return migration bureaucracy indeed relies – at least to a certain extent – on the voluntariness and willingness of the asylum seeker to agree in a return and collaborate with the bureaucracy. The longer the

process proceeds, the more the return migrant becomes dependent from the return migration bureaucracy. In the initial situation during the return migration consultation, the immediate bargaining power of the return migration bureaucrat is rather limited. The threat of deportation is one aspect, the promised financial support another one, though these are no more than rather abstract threats and incentives respectively. This situation radically changes once back in Tunisia. For the return migration bureaucracy, the aspect of persuasion and incentives diminished, as the programme has already achieved its main goal: an inexpensive return without the use of physical violence, as we have already discussed in Chapter Six. The return migrant, however, is in a more fragile and vulnerable situation than ever before. Through the return, he has given up his main argument in this power game with the return migration bureaucracy in the form of his "undesired" presence in Switzerland. All the sudden, he finds himself in a weak position back in his country of origin. He has not yet received the financial assistance he was promised, and he is facing a series of conditions he has to meet in order to receive any further assistance.

Conclusion

In this conclusion, I would like to relate the ethnographic observations on the governance of voluntariness to David Graeber's work on bureaucracy (2012; 2015). Graeber argues that bureaucracy is ultimately based on violence in its literal form. For his argument, he uses a specific notion of structural violence, distinguishing between social structures based on violence and structures that

produce violence. In other words, in the first case, violence is the generating principle, in the second case, violence is the effect or outcome (see Graeber 2012:112ff). A similar distinction can be found also elsewhere, for example in Scheper-Hughes's (1993) work on children in favelas in Northeast Brazil, growing up in an environment that is marked by a general situation of scarcity, sickness, and death. In this book, she develops a similar idea of social structures based on violence.

With a specific focus on bureaucracy, Graeber (2012) argues that we should take the aspect of violence seriously and in its literal meaning when discussing bureaucracies as agencies that exercise structural violence. In this perspective, bureaucracies are at the same time structures of violence and violent structures. This means that they are structures that operate on the basis of violence, and they are structures that have violent effects. The omnipresent threat of physical violence is needed to make the per se nonviolent bureaucracy work.

The detailed analysis of the return migration bureaucracy through the different ethnographic vignettes – in particular the study of the encounters between individual bureaucrats and migrants, as it was the focus in this chapter – tend to overlook the aspect of structural violence. It is difficult to capture the everyday violence of the return migration bureaucracy, as it is beyond reach of the direct observational gaze. It can be captured only indirectly through reconstruction. The narrated reconstruction of the return migration biographies of my interlocutors allow way better to capture the agency of the return migrants and

how they navigate assisted voluntary return between constraints and possibilities than discovering and elaborating the bureaucratic structures of violence. Many of the return migration biographies in Chapter Five highlight this aspect. Let me recall the example of Fathi the fisherman once again. His narration allows to discover a lot of deliberate choices to continue his transnational migration trajectory or stay at a certain place for longer. The lens of the autonomy of migration risks to gloss all too easily over the broader structuration of the field with its enabling and constraining aspects. This chapter – and the previous one as well – compensate somewhat this one-sidedness. They both bring back into focus the structural aspects of the return migration bureaucracy.

For this reason, this chapter aimed at exploring how everyday violence of the migration regime is expressed and experience in the small everyday encounters between the return migration bureaucracy and return migrants. This allowed to explore at the same time how AVR migration operates on the basis of violence – i.e. the threat of forced deportation. At the same time, it showed that return migration is not necessarily the admission of a failure from the perspective of return migrants. Under specific circumstances, joining the AVR programme can be considered as an appropriation of mobility within the context of the AVR programme. As such, this chapter has demonstrated how the appropriation of mobility not necessarily works "against" the logics of the migration bureaucracy, but sometimes rather "within".

Let me explore this aspect further with a reference to Mouldi, the sheep farmer we encountered in this chapter. The European border regime denies the possibility of transnational mobility for migrants like Mouldi. From the very beginning of his migration trajectory, his intention was always to return back to his family. He considered the temporal labour migration as a means to improve his economic conditions in Tunisia. As there was no other path than the *harraga*, he opted for this type of transnational mobility. When he later applied for the return migration programme, it can be read as an appropriation of mobility within the logic of the return migration bureaucracy. He tried to use the few possibilities of transnational mobility open to him in his own way.

However, it would stretch too far the thesis of the autonomy of migration AOM to describe his choice as a moment of autonomy, and neither are his particular mobile practices challenging the border regime in any way, as the thesis of the AOM would argue. Rather, it is the temporal alliance of individual mobile practices, and the dominant prescribed paths of mobility. The intentions of Mouldi meet for a certain and very specific moment with the logics of the return migration regime. However, it is important to insist on the temporality and provisional character of this alignment; while the return is definitive in the logics of the return migration regime, it is only a provisional snapshot of the actual situation for Moulid. Or as he succinctly explained: "For the moment, it is the right decision."

This brings up a further aspect; the incommensurability of the different economic rationales and how the return migration bureaucracy's rationale prevails. Return migrants are forced to take short-term decisions and follow short-term economic strategies. They cannot afford to invest large sums in a project with the vague prospect of a potential return-on-investment in the far future. In contrast, the logic of the return migration programme follows precisely the rationale of a long-term economic strategy. It thus requires a considerable amunt of financial resources and time. This creates a permanent tension between the return migrant and the return migration bureaucrats. Firstly, return migrants as Mouldi (discussed in this chapter) or Fathi (discussed in Chapter Five) are embedded in networks of mutual dependencies.[95] Just recall how Fathi's uncle pressed him to pay back the debts within short notice. These social obligations do not allow the return migrants to follow the long-term investment-based logic of the return migration bureaucracy. Instead, they have to search for quick-fixes in order to satisfy the demands of all sorts from their social environment. And secondly, as mundane as it might sound, their first concern is to make ends meet at the end of the day and to struggle for covering the daily costs of living. The discussion in this chapter thus shows that the return migration bureaucracy's

[95] The idea of a network of mutual dependencies and financial obligations has been developed by Graeber in his work on debts (Graeber 2011), building on the long anthropologic tradition of theories of gift exchange (Mauss 1925). He sketches a picture of premodern societies where the state is absent. In these societies, financial obligations are linked to and embedded in social networks. In contrast, with the emerging state, this mutual dependency between social ties and financial obligations is disrupted. Financial obligations become impersonal and are turned into debts. In his account, Graeber idealises the mutual dependency between social networks and financial obligations, as social networks might be at the origin of highly unequal and extremely dependent social relationships as well.

perspective on return migrants as subjects who need education in order to become economically rational subjects falls rather short. It reduces the perspective of economic rationality to one single and hegemonic perspective on economic actions and reasoning.

VIII. Conclusion: The Governance of Transnational Mobility and the Contradictions of the Modern Liberal Nation State

In this conclusion, I come back to the inherent contradictions of the modern liberal nation-state in the governance of transnational mobility. The institution of assisted voluntary return migration AVR is a prime site where these contradictions come to light and can be observed empirically. The idea of free movement as a genuine core value of liberalism meets the idea of nation-state sovereignty that consists – among other features – in deciding autonomously who is allowed to cross the state borders and who is denied the entry. [96]

[96] I do not further discuss the different shades of philosophical liberalism and their position with regard to the freedom of movement. There are indeed significant differences, yet the majority shares in theory the idea that restrictions to free movements are inherently illiberal and need careful justification and deliberation (see Cassee 2013, cf. the communitarianist approach of Walzer 1983). Outliers are theories that could rather be described as libertarian (e.g. Wellman 2008).

Clandestine migration undermines the second idea, as it ignores the explicit rules of border crossing. This ignorance can be read as part of the autonomy of migration AOM.[97] It thus creates a dilemma for the modern liberal nation-state: How shall the state react to the undermining of state sovereignty and questioning state borders through migratory practices? The institution of assisted voluntary return AVR is the attempt to address this dilemma. The analysis of the empirical material of this dissertation suggests that AVR is a response that *does not solve* the underlying dilemma, but *rather transforms and conceals* the inherent contradictions. The previous chapters presented a series of ethnographic vignettes of the return migration bureaucracy that allowed the study of these inherent contradictions of the modern liberal nation state, confronting the perspective of the mobile subjects with the perspective of the state. The dissertation suggests capturing these contradictions with the notion of *governed voluntariness*.

Throughout the chapters, there are two major recurrent and contested fields that are constitutive for this governed voluntariness. The first field of contestation can be described as humanitarian reason (see Fassin 2012). This notion opens an analytical window on the return migration bureaucracy's attempts to

[97] As my review of the thesis of the AOM shows, this condensed statement does not capture the dialectics between the hegemony of the border regime and its undermining by the autonomy of migration in full detail. As I have shown, the ignorance of the explicit rules of border crossing might comply with the logics of the border regime on a larger scale, as it contributes to the production of a group of people characterised by their exploitability through their precarious status as deportable aliens. This shows that the ignorance of the explicit rules of border crossing is not necessarily and exclusively an act of – unarticulated – resistance.

reconcile the incommensurable contradiction between voluntariness and governance. The other field of contestation – described through the analytical lens of the thesis of the autonomy of migration AOM – is the appropriation of transnational mobility at the same time against *and* in accordance with the migration regime.

The following discussion of these two fields of contestation lead to some concluding remarks on bureaucracy as structural violence and as a structure of violence alike. The argument is then summarised with a discussion on assisted voluntary return migration as an expression of the contradictions of the modern liberal nation state facing transnational mobility.

Compassion Instead of Rights and Entitlements

In recent years, we can observe the rise of humanitarian reason as a dominant idea for the governance of asylum seekers. A language of compassion – in combination with means of repression – has gradually replaced the language of rights and entitlements that traditionally accompanied the discourses around asylum (see Fassin 2012). This replacement restructures the relationship between the state and asylum seekers with regard to entitlements and obligations. In a humanitarian perspective, the asylum seeker is no longer subject and bearer of rights. Simultaneously, the state is no longer the institution with the legal

obligation to protect asylum seekers from prosecution.[98] Instead, asylum applications are considered in a perspective of deservingness. As Fassin (2005) shows, suffering has become the point of reference for the question whether an asylum seeker is worth of protection. Eventually, the suffering body has become the ultimate proof for the deservingness of asylum. In other words, questions of rights have given way to this humanitarian gaze on suffering.[99]

The Tunisian migrants we met in this dissertation do not qualify as refugees according to the law. From a purely legalistic perspective, none of them fulfils the relevant criteria for protection; neither on the basis of the relevant national laws nor the international laws and conventions.[100] Such a narrow legalistic perspective leads to the prevailing image of the "bogus asylum seeker" in Switzerland's migration bureaucracy with regard to Tunisian asylum seekers and legitimised by the officials in their colloquial discourses with reference to the asylum statistics that show an extremely low percentage of asylum granted to Tunisians. The humanitarian discourse with its shift in perspective from rights to charity is thus intertwined with a "hermeneutics of suspicion" (see Leiter

[98] More precisely, the obligation of the state is legally captured in the "non-refoulement" principle under international human rights law. Strictly speaking, the principle of humanitarian reason does not question this principle in legal terms. However, the shift from a rights-based discourse towards a humanitarian-based discourse obfuscates the legal background of asylum as a right and replaces it with the idea of a charitable act.

[99] See also Ticktin (2006). She shows how humanitarianism and compassion makes illness a mean for sans-papiers to obtain a residence permit in France.

[100] On International level, the relevant legal document is The International Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, on European Level it is the European Convention on Human Rights, and on national level it is the Asylum Act.

2005).[101] As a consequence, every asylum application is accompanied by the shadow of doubt. The state's perspective of "solving a migration problem" thus shifts the attention away from the question of rights – even in its narrow legalistic definition – towards a managerial problem. In short, from a state's perspective, the Tunisian asylum seekers' mobility is not considered in terms of rights, but rather in terms of a problem of governance or management of mobility. Asylum becomes a problem to be solved and is no longer a right to be granted.

This shift from a rights-based perspective to what I would call here a managerial perspective has two effects: First, it implicitly denies any right to transnational mobility to Tunisian migrants, as the question of rights is shifted beyond reach. And second, it transforms the struggles and contestations over the right to transnational mobility into a technical issue to be solved. Tunisian asylum seekers are not subjects and bearers of rights (no matter how substantiated their asylum claims might be), but become the objects of governance and passive individuals that deserve – at best – a "return in dignity" as a return migration counsellor described the orientation of her work. The bureaucratic instrument of assisted voluntary return that aims at regulating transnational mobility is clothed in a language of charity. The conflicts between return migrants and the return migration officials I described in the previous chapters are therefore the result of this reduction of the return migrant to a passive recipient of charity and

[101] The term hermeneutics of suspicion is borrowed from Leiter (2005) who applied it to describe a certain strand of social theory and goes back to Ricoeur (1977).

benevolence, and of different ideas and concepts of the right to mobility. All the more as the Tunisian migrants we encountered through their stories of mobility in this dissertation did not only insist on framing their transnational mobility in terms of rights but strategically mobilised the asylum law to claim their right to transnational mobility. [102] This amplifies the above-mentioned state's perception of the "bogus asylum seeker" who "abuses the law". Framed in this language, it is only the logical consequence that the state considers clandestine Tunisian migration as a problem to be managed and solved.

The state narrative of the "bogus asylum seeker" is tightly linked to another popular image of transnational mobile people; the image of the economic migrant. Instead of asylum seekers in need of protection, clandestine Tunisian migrants are conceived of as economic migrants. As a consequence, the legal point of reference is not the asylum laws, but the immigration laws with its economistic focus with regard to third country nationals. In the context of the Schengen-Dublin agreements, the legal architecture to capture transnational mobility of third-country nationals narrows down the possibilities and expressions of mobility to these two alternatives: admission through asylum or economic migration. As third-country nationals, Tunisians do not enjoy the right of free movement into and within the Schengen-Dublin area. As economic

[102] The notion of the right to transnational mobility does not refer to a codified law but originates in de Genova's (2010) argument of the freedom of movement as a genuine human quality. As such, it can be understood as a natural right. Mobility is thus a fundamental quality of human life itself.

migrants, they can claim their right to transnational mobility only under very specific circumstances.

These two contradicting notions of rights to mobility put forward by Tunisian migrants and the return migration officials eventually lead to two mutually exclusive perspectives on AVR. As sketched above, for return migration officials AVR is one instrument among others in their toolbox in order to complete their mission – the management of migration. In their perception, AVR is entirely dissociated from any form of rights to mobility. In contrast, for the migrants it might be simply a means to get their stuck migration project moving further again and exercising their right to mobility. For example, this becomes highly visible in the mutual misunderstandings between return migrants and return migration officials about the role of return migration consultancy. While the return migration bureaucrats interpret their role as providers of help and assistance, return migrants often frame it in a rights-based perspective – at least in the first instance and until they discover that the return migration office is not at all a legal advice office. This mutual misconception is a source of conflict in the everyday interaction between the return migration consultants and potential return migrants: The migrants are seeking legal advice and are disappointed to find the return migration office as an institution that offers assistance for a so-called voluntary return. Instead of providing legal assistance for a potential appeal against a negative asylum decision considered as unjust or wrong by migrants, the return migration office provides alleviation of the hardship of return, caused by the very same migration regimes.

Appropriation of Transnational Mobility

The thesis of the autonomy of migration AOM provides a productive way to capture these contradictions from a perspective of mobility. The six individual migration biographies of the clandestine Tunisian migrants discussed in detail in this dissertation have shown the complicated and contested relationship between rights and compassion as well – but from a radically different perspective and with a radically different outcome. The Tunisian return migrants capture their transnational mobility in terms of rights. Along the same lines, they consider AVR in terms of entitlements rather than charity, as shown in the previous section.

As already mentioned, from the perspective of the asylum bureaucracy, the overwhelming majority of Tunisian asylum seekers is considered as "bogus asylum seekers" (in the words of one migration official I interviewed) who do not deserve protection. As such, they are threatened by deportation and reduced to objects of governance due to their precarious status, described by de Genova (2010) as deportability. Excluded from the freedom of movement in the European border regime that has established a system of differentiated mobility, there is often only one way to claim and exercise the right to transnational mobility for young male Tunisians; the – in general temporal – subjugation under the rules of the asylum bureaucracy.

At first sight, this subjugation might appear as a paradox, yet this tactic can be read in two different ways; either as an imposition of the hegemonic rules of the

border regime on the mobile subject, or as a contestation of the hegemonic rules of transnational mobility through subjugation under the rules of the asylum bureaucracy and transforming AVR migration into a tool for one's own aspirations of mobility.[103] The latter reading of this subjugation shares the core premise of the thesis of the autonomy of migration AOM. The appropriation of mobility is thus a tactics from the repertoire of the "weapons of the weak" (Scott 1985). Using the legal institution of asylum is thus a means to reclaim one's transnational mobility against all odds.

As outlined in the theoretical remarks in Chapter 2, I suggest considering the thesis of the AOM as a productive *analytical lens* and less as a descriptive tool. It allows to understand migration patterns and the individual aspirations of clandestine Tunisian migrants. In particular the examination of the six migration biographies in Chapter 5 emphasises the dialectics of individual migration decisions; often they are both contestation *and* subjugation at the same time. While the thesis of the AOM tends to draw an exaggerated picture of the individual migration decision as conscious contestations and an unarticulated act of protest simultaneously, my analysis of the individual transnational migration trajectories rather suggests that they are the results of a search for individual responses to economic deprivation and the lack of prospective upward

[103] I use de Certeau's (1990) distinction between tactics and strategy to indicate the radical difference in the way individual choices are structured in a field of fundamental unequal distribution of power. Tactics refers to the practice where choices are restricted. Individuals have to radically align their choices with the few remaining options left to them by the dominant social power structure.

socio-economic mobility. Quite often, these individual responses even serve as a stabilising force to the hegemonic migration regime; an aspect the thesis of the AOM tends to neglect.

However, taken as an analytical lens, the thesis of the AOM allows dismantling of the dominant hegemonic figures of the "bogus asylum seeker" and the "economic migrant" and expose their normative underpinnings. It shows that both figures are the result of a perspective that takes immobility for granted and mobility as the exception. Although the empirical description of the transnational trajectories of the young male Tunisian *harragas* indeed suggests that economic reasons are a major driving force for their departure, the thesis of the AOM as an analytical lens provides a different tool to describe their trajectories; as an appropriation of transnational mobility, or as escape (see Papadopoulos et al. 2008).

Considered in this perspective, the *harraga* is a means to escape the socio-economic dead-end many young male Tunisians experience in their everyday life. Since the collapse of the Ben Ali regime, things have turned from bad to worse with respect to the socio-economic situation of the younger generations. For many young people, the revolution of 2011 was linked to economic hopes and expectations in particular. All the greater was the disappointment, when these expectations crushed in the post-revolutionary economic decline.

The thesis of the AOM thus provides a further corrective against a narrow reading of the *harraga* of young male Tunisians as a merely economic migration and sheds light on a further field of contestation between migrants and the return migration bureaucracy; the idea and meaning of labour. For the migrants, labour – or the lack thereof – is a major driving force of their respective mobile trajectories. For most of them, it is the reason to leave Tunisia and try their luck elsewhere; either in Italy in the legal grey zone of self-employment and informal employments, or as undocumented migrant labourers in France, Switzerland or some other Eurpean country. Yet their search for work is not an end in itself, but rather part of their aspiration to conduct a meaningful and dignified life. In most of the migration narratives this dissertation analysed, this implies the striving for upward social mobility.

In contrast, the return migration bureaucracy relies on a more simplistic notion of labour. Its explicit aim is the removal of the Tunisian *harragas* from Switzerland, where the migration regime sees them as the unproductive and undesirable surplus population. A successful return consists in their reinsertion into the Tunisian labour market.[104] In other words, the notion of labour mobilised in the context of the AVR programmes is not connected with the idea

[104] As discussed in Chapter 6, the return migration bureaucracy assesses a successful return in a very particular and idiosyncratic way. A return migrant's project is a success, when he first has remained in Tunisia and second still pursues some kind of economic activity related to the project six months after his return.

of pursuing a meaningful and purposeful human activity but reduced to its economistic core.

The thesis of the AOM thus allows an understanding of the Tunisian *harragas* not as mere economic migrants but as subjects who are striving for a life worth living. The escape from Tunisia is the expression of an individual and unarticulated protest against a society that denies them the possibility of freedom and upward social mobility. Trapped in low-paid and insecure jobs in the informal labour market, the *harraga* is the attempt to realise one's freedom and to define oneself as a human being that pursues a purposeful activity. It is the attempt to escape "the waiting room of Tunisian society", as one young Tunisan told me once. This indefinite waiting and the feeling of having no place in society is characteristic for the younger generation in Tunisia (see also Elliot 2016).

Deportation, Voluntary Return, and Structural Violence

The shift from rights and entitlements to benevolence and compassion leads to a second aspect I want to address in this section; return migration bureaucracies as structural violence and as structures of violence at the same time. In contrast to the previous part that focused on the mobile trajectories of the *harragas* in an AOM perspective, the following part returns to the infrastructure of migration control and management. Framing the governance of mobility in a humanitarian perspective ignores that the institution of assisted voluntary

return migration is embedded in a wider context of migration management, and – in particular – of deportation. In his reflections on bureaucracies, David Graeber (2012) emphasises that bureaucracies have to be understood as structures *of* violence, and not only as structural violence. In other words, for Graeber bureaucracies are the direct outcome of state violence. He suggests taking the meaning of structural violence at face value and rejecting its reduction to a mere metaphorical meaning. Although Graeber's reading of structures of violence tends to overemphasise violence as a generic feature of bureaucracies barely hiding the monopoly of violence of the modern liberal nation state, it provides a useful analytical lens for the discussion of return migration bureaucracies. I therefore refrain from identifying bureaucracies as structures of violence *per se*, though I retain Graeber's attention to the underlying violence in its literal sense. In particular in the case of AVR, it is of particular importance to point out the relationship between the threat of forced deportation and assisted return that relies precisely on this threat of violence as a constitutive aspect of this bureaucracy as described by Graeber.

Although the denial of the right of transnational mobility finds its expression in a language of help and assistance, it is impossible to understand the programmes for so-called assisted voluntary return without its underlying counterpart; forced deportation. The deportability (de Genova 2002) as an always present possibility structures assisted voluntary return in a fundamental way. The ethnographic data suggests that some of the return migration officials are well aware of this relationship and even emphasise it, juxtaposing explicitly assisted voluntary return as the way that enables the

execution of a negative asylum decision through deportation without falling back on explicit state violence through forced deportation. Other return migration officials rather conceal this relationship, presenting their role much more in terms of advisors, indebted to both the state and the individual asylum seeker simultaneously. They deny the fact that assisted voluntary return and forced deportation are simply two sides of the same coin that co-constitute each other. In short, the compassion they offer in the form of assisted voluntary return is only possible through its counterpart; the threat of forced deportation.

Simultaneously, forced deportation without the more subtle forms of coercion – in particular assisted return – is inconceivable as well. A migration regime relying only on brute force and forced deportation to execute negative asylum decision would collapse immediately. Forced deportation is an extremely expensive and ineffective method of governing transnational mobility and enforcing negative asylum decisions. The state is thus dependent as well on a certain degree of "cooperation" of the rejected asylum seekers. Furthermore, a "successful" migration management – in the state's perspective – is dependent not only on the cooperation of the asylum seekers, but also of the returning state. It requires the international cooperation between states. For this reason, Switzerland has signed a series of bilateral migration partnerships and migration cooperation agreements to facilitate the deportation of rejected

asylum seekers.[105] However, these agreements do not always secure a smooth and swift readmission procedure, as for example the case of Algeria demonstrates. Although Switzerland concluded a readmission agreement with Algeria, it has remained dead letter in practice.[106] This is due to the conditions under which the country accepts return migrants: It allows the readmission of its fellow citizens only under the condition of a voluntary return. Unsurprisingly, this is common knowledge among Algerian asylum seekers in Switzerland. They know exactly how to escape a return to Algeria: when they oppose to a return, there will be no deportation as Algeria as the country of destination simply refuses their readmission.

So far, this summary of the migration bureaucracy as structure of violence focused on various forms of migration governance, where the state takes an active role. Let me now introduce a further form, which I suggest calling non-intervention or ignorance for the lack of a more precise term. I argue that the

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[105] The *migration partnership*—laid down in the form of a *memorandum of understanding*—is the most encompassing form of agreements. The self-description reads: "The objective of migration partnerships is to adopt a comprehensive, global approach to migration while taking account of Switzerland's own interests, those of the partner country and those of the migrants themselves (a 'win-win-win' approach)." (https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/internationales/internat-zusarbeit/bilateral/migrationspartnerschaften.html; last accessed 07.01.2016) As in the case of Tunisia, it includes not only detailed specifications on readmission procedures, but also promises traineeship exchange places. However, the realisation of the different parts remains often cumbersome. For Tunisians, the traineeship programme has remained dead letter. The *migration cooperation agreement* is a bilateral agreement that specifies the memorandum of understanding on a migration partnership. It stipulates in detail the procedures of the different parts of the migration partnership. (For an overview of Switzerland's migration cooperation agreements, see https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/internationales/internat-zusarbeit/bilateral/migration.html; last accessed 07.01.2019). In the case of Tunisia, it is remarkable that the agreements lays out in detail the readmission procedures, but only provides some cursory remarks on the other aspects of the agreement (see https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2014/586/de; last accessed 07.01.2016).

[106] See "Abkommen zwischen dem Bundesrat der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft und der Regierung der Demokratischen Volksrepublik Algerien über den Personenverkehr" from 2007 (https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2007/894/de; last accessed 07.01.2016).

state's decision *not to intervene* has to be placed in the same picture. The case of Foued can serve as an example to explain this aspect of migration governance. The argument here is that it is not necessarily the expression of a failed governance of transnational mobility, when migrants escape the control of the migration regime. Rather, leaving space for escape might be a result of the border regime's deliberative strategy. Remember Foued who was fed up with the tight surveillance and strict rules in the procession and reception centre. As these centres are not closed detention centres, but semi-open where you can enter and leave at any time, it is a simple thing to escape the asylum procedure.[107] Foued simply left the centre, abandoned his asylum procedure, and decided to try his luck elsewhere. In the official statistics, cases like him are counted as "unsupervised departures" ("unkontrollierte Abreise" in German or "depart non controlé" in French). In other words, this disappearance from the statistics signifies that the case is settled for the migration bureaucracy, although it is an open secret that many of the asylum seekers did not depart but remained in the country as so-called *sans-papiers*.

[107] There is simply no legal basis for the imprisonment of asylum seekers. An ongoing asylum procedure is not sufficient for an administrative detention – contrary, for example, to a detention pending deportation, which requires a final negative asylum decision and the feasibility of the deportation itself.

Governed Voluntariness and the Contradictions of the Liberal Nation State

The third set of concluding remarks returns back to the contradictions of the modern liberal nation state that emerge in full detail in the governance of assisted return migration. I suggested the notion of *governed voluntariness* to capture the fundamental contradiction constitutive for assisted voluntary return as a tool of migration management. It allows to describe how voluntariness is produced in this specific context of clandestine migration and deportability. As laid out in detail by several political philosophers of liberalism dealing with the problem of transnational migration and the modern liberal nation state, (e.g. Carens 1995, Cassee 2016), liberalism embraces the idea of free movement – at least in theory. Limiting the free movement of people is thus the dark side of liberalism, though it is constitutive for any modern liberal nation state, as the social reality demonstrates on a daily basis. In particular when we descend from the heights of political philosophy into the messy social realities, the empirical data suggests that these two faces of the modern liberal nation state in dealing with transnational mobility are inextricably intertwined and cannot be separated.

One might now object that coercive measures are necessarily and always part of the governmental instruments of the modern liberal nation state and do not constitute a contradiction in any form *per se*, nor is it a particular feature of the governance of transnational mobility specifically. Graeber's (2012) reflections of the notion of state bureaucracy as structures of violence might point into this direction. The police as the institution with the legitimate monopoly on the use

of force is a prime example how the state bureaucracy is backed by the threat of mere violence. The case of transnational migration, however, is different and cannot be simply subsumed under the same argument. What is precisely the difference? The migration bureaucracy does not govern aspects of common goods, rights, or services as other parts of the state bureaucracy. Rather, it governs the boundaries of who belongs to the community of those who are – in whatever form – entitled in the common goods, rights, and services, governed by the other parts of the state bureaucracy. In other words, the migration bureaucracy decides the question who falls under the sphere of governance of the state and who is excluded from it. This adds an entirely different quality to the state bureaucracy: It is not only the power of disposition over certain aspects, but over the fundamental question of being entitled to make legitimate claims towards the community or the state. One could draw a parallel to Hannah Arendt's (1951: 267-302) famous reflection on human rights and the "right to have rights". To rephrase it in a different way, the migration bureaucracy governs a common good of second order, as it decides on the right of the legitimate participation in the community with all legal rights and obligations.

The institution of assisted voluntary return is thus a reminder of the multi-layered relationship between the modern liberal nation state and the individual whose capacity to raise legitimate claims towards the community or the state is constantly questioned. Simultaneously, clandestine migration in the form of the *harraga* is the reminder that borders always remain porous and the many forms of escape of state control are constitutive for the border regime as well. The

harraga is the appropriation of mobility of those who are excluded from the promises of transnational social mobility – even though this appropriation may not lead to freedom, but into new forms of dependencies.

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